

V29#1

DRAMATICS

An Educational Magazine for Directors, Teachers, and Students of Dramatic Arts

Volume XXIX, No. 1

OCTOBER, 1957

50c Per Copy



The Diary of Anne Frank, Troupe 153, Lamar Senior High School, Houston, Texas, Ruth R. Denney, Sponsor, to R.: Diana Francis, Jerry Wright, and Bobbie Hainline, all members of the "all star cast" in Texas, 1956-57 school year.

FROM "BLACK FACE" TO "THE BLACK CROOK"

by Delwin B. Dusenbury

THESPIAN OF THE MONTH — HELEN HARDING ALDISERT

FROM MATILDA OF FLANDERS TO ELEONORA OF AQUITAINE

by Charles R. Trumbo and Pollyonn

DO YOU WANT TO READ ALOUD!

by Leslie Irene Coger

REGIONAL CONFERENCES — 1957-58

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by Don H. Poston

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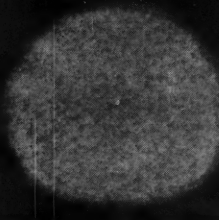
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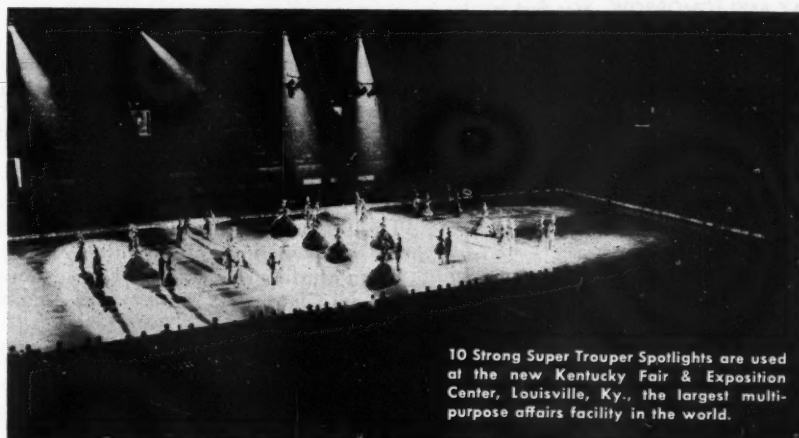
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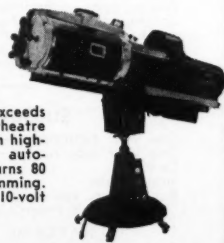
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EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR: LEON C. MILLER

Contributing Editors

Charles R. Trumbo Bartow High School
Bartow, Florida
Delwin B. Dusenbury Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Leslie Irene Coger Southwest Missouri St. College
Springfield, Missouri

Department Editors

Earl W. Blank Northeastern State College
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
Willard Friederich Marietta College
Marietta, Ohio
Frieda E. Reed Upper Darby Sr. High School
Upper Darby, Pennsylvania

Advisory Editors

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Fairmont, West Virginia
Blandford Jennings Clayton High School
Clayton, Missouri
Paul F. Opp Fairmont State College
Fairmont, West Virginia
Doris M. Marshall Helena High School
Helena, Montana
Doris Adley South Kitsap High School
Port Orchard, Washington
Maizie G. Weil Upper Darby Sr. High School
Upper Darby, Pennsylvania

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As I See It . . .

WANTED: SPEECH AND DRAMA
TEACHERS!

WITH THE opening of school this fall I am becoming more concerned than ever by the reports coming to this office from school administrators throughout the country about the shortage of teachers qualified to teach speech and secondary school dramatics. In other words, the demand for speech and drama teachers has for the first time to my knowledge exceeded the available supply.

This crisis is of vital importance to all educational theater in that the progress made in these fields the past twenty years may become stymied, that by force of necessity regression sets in. To us teaching in this field may come further negative reaction simply because there is no further progress. Thus my earnest plea first to all teachers of speech and drama is that they promote among their students an aggressive encouragement for them to specialize in speech and high school theater; and secondly, that both the department of education and the department of speech and theater arts in our colleges and universities become aware of this urgent need and do something about it.

On the other hand, there is one encouraging note concerning this crisis: secondary school administrators are recognizing the value of speech and theater as a really worthwhile "growing-up" experience; they are seeking for speech and drama teachers and are willing to pay good salaries to get them. Speech and drama are now in most schools no longer the "step-child" of the curriculum.

We who love the high school theater must accept the challenge to provide future teachers in our field. It is for us to pass on to our present students our own enthusiasm and devotion. If we fail, then the "live" secondary school theater will indeed die. Our aim this school year is for each of our 1768 Thespian sponsors to recruit one high school student to be tomorrow's teacher of speech and drama. You are our best, and shall I say only, salesmen.

—O—

WE MISSED YOU IN BOSTON

ALTHOUGH I was delighted to renew old acquaintances and meet new sponsors at the AETA national convention in Boston, I was not too impressed with Thespian sponsor attendance. According to our own registration at the Thespian table, only 27 sponsors attended the convention. With a membership of 1768, such attendance is certainly negligible. I wish more of you were members of AETA.

The secondary school "project" (why it is so labeled is beyond me) of AETA is under superb leadership. Our orchid of the month goes to Wallace Smith, chairman, for the fine work he has done since he assumed chairmanship of this "project." His goal is to change the "project" to "division," but with so little interest nationally by high school drama teachers in this professional organization, progress is so slow that at times it must be most discouraging. Let's get behind Wallace one hundred per cent; he not only deserves, but has earned our support.

DATELINE: JUNE 16-21 1958 AT PURDUE

FINALLY, let me remind you that our own Seventh National Dramatic Arts Conference will be held the week of June 16, 1958, at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana. Our attendance goal is 1000 high school students and sponsors. Plans are already under way in a number of schools, as, chartering a bus in the state of Washington; chartering a train coach both in Florida and in Pennsylvania; other schools in Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Georgia, Virginia, New York, Arkansas, and California have shown interest. Will you be there for a week of secondary school theater?

For your information our national conference has been approved by the contest and conference committee of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Why not be among those who will visit for the first time the beautiful Purdue campus?

—O—

COMING YOUR WAY

HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, drama, Gina Lollobrigida, Anthony Quinn. (AA)

PAL JOEY, musical drama, Rita Hayworth, Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak. (COL)

THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON, comedy-drama, Kenneth More, Sally Ann Howes. (COL)

RAINTREE COUNTY, drama, Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift. (MGM)

LES GIRLS, musical comedy, Gene Kelly, Mitzi Gaynor. (MGM)

I ACCUSE, drama, Jose Ferrer, Vivica Linfors. (MGM)

TEACHER'S PET, comedy, Clark Gable, Doris Day. (PARA)

A FAREWELL TO ARMS, drama, Rock Hudson, Jennifer Jones. (20TH)

PARIS HOLIDAY, comedy, Bob Hope, Anita Eckberg. (UA)

THE HELEN MORGAN STORY, drama, Ann Blyth, Paul Newman. (WB)

NO TIME FOR SERGEANTS, comedy, Andy Griffith. (WB)

—O—

BROADWAY LINE-UP

BOOTH THEATER—Visit to a Small Planet, Cyril Ritchard. Comedy.

BROADHURST THEATER—Auntie Mame, Rosalind Russell. Comedy.

46TH STREET THEATER—New Girl in Town, Gwen Verdon, Thelma Ritter. Musical Comedy.

HELEN HAYES THEATER—Long Day's Journey into Night, Florence Eldrich, Frederic March. Drama.

HELLINGER THEATER—My Fair Lady, Julie Andrews, Rex Harrison. Musical comedy.

IMPERIAL THEATER—Most Happy Fella. Musical drama.

MAJESTIC THEATER—Happy Hunting, Ethel Merman. Musical comedy.

PLYMOUTH THEATER—Hole in the Head, Paul Douglas. Comedy-drama.

ROYALE THEATER—The Tunnel of Love, Tom Ewell. Comedy.

ST. JAMES THEATER—Li'l Abner, Edith Adams. Musical comedy.

SHUBERT THEATER—The Bells are Ringing, Judy Holliday. Musical comedy.

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Impetus for the hilarious, madcap complications that ensue is provided by a letter that arrives for Aunt Phoebe from Rochelle Mignonne, a “French chantoozey” with a Bronx accent. Rochelle has evidence implicating night club owner Big Joe Moroni in a sports-fix scandal, and Bill, with Mickey’s help, goes after the story. To do so, he has to dress up as “Aunt Phoebe”—and then things really start popping. Almost under the noses of Bill and Mickey, Rochelle is murdered, and they have to solve her killing before the next morning’s deadline. Of course, virtue—and true love—triumph in the end, but not before the audience has been regaled by a number of the most side-splitting scenes that ever rocked a theatre with laughter.

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DR. LESLIE Irene Coger, Professor of Speech and Dramatic Arts, Southwest Missouri State College, Springfield, Missouri, while discussing with me the many available services of the National Thespian Society at the Speech and Theater Convention in Chicago last Christmas, expressed concern about the infrequency of articles in national educational magazines on the subject of oral interpretation. She believes in the educational value of secondary school theater experiences, but she also feels that oral reading of poetry, monologues, oral book reports, dramatic readings have been neglected in the stress of theater.

Having no satisfactory rebuttal to her questions and few available facts concerning printed articles, I had no other alternative except to accept her positive and forceful thinking on this subject so much so that in this volume there will appear a series of eight articles on this subject. After reading her first article of her series you will agree with me that Dr. Coger, teacher, editor, author, is indeed a welcomed addition to our editorial staff for this current school year.

—O—



Don H. Poston

above all the final selection of the play is solely the director's decision, or else "the director has lost his dream."



Dr. Delwin B. Dusenbury



Charles R. Trumbo

WE WELCOME again to our staff Dr. Delwin B. Dusenbury, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa., and Charles R. Trumbo, Sponsor 728, Bartow, Florida, High School. Dr. Dusenbury starts this month his series on a *History of the American Musical Theater*. Mr. Trumbo, co-authoring his series this season with Pollyann (Mrs. Trumbo), will conclude his several series on period costuming and staging with his latest series on *Costumes Worn by* Royalty.

—O—

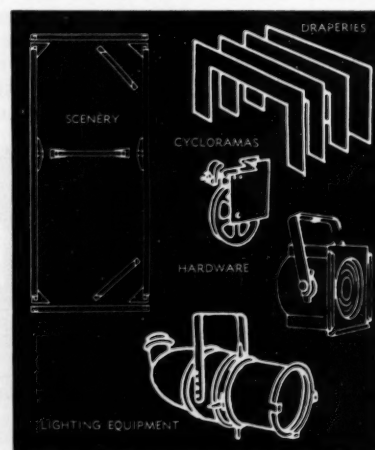
OUR THESPIAN of the Month: Mrs. Helen Harding Aldisert, Troupe 1160, The Andrews School for Girls, Willoughby, Ohio, Mrs. Harold Hall, Sponsor.

—O—

ALL OF our departmental editors are with us again this year. Frieda Reed, co-sponsor of Troupe 1000, Upper Darby, Pa., Sr. High School, will be our editor for *Theater for Children*; Dr. Earl Blank, Director of Dramatics, Northeastern State College, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, will continue his excellent editing of *Plays of the Month*; and Professor Willard Friederich, Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio, will present his *brief-viewing* of the latest books and plays. Your editor is grateful to have the assistance of these editors who are so vitally interested in bringing to you through the printed page the best available material on their respective subjects.



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Donald Doss is stunned as his girl picks the wrong moment to walk in on his family!

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THE FAMILY NOBODY WANTED

(Cast 10 w, 7 m. One set. Playbooks 90c. Royalty, \$25.00)

Here are reports from the first directors to produce this play:

L. Lage, High School, Birmingham, Mich.

"This is the finest play I have had the pleasure of seeing, producing or taking part in. The reaction was very favorable. I would like more wholesome plays such as this."

L. Adams, High School, Montpelier, Idaho

"Our principal said, 'Such a play is excellent for public relations. Thank you for directing it.' A typical remark from our patrons was, 'Best high school play I have ever seen.' The audience response was excellent."

A. Hyelle, High School, Spring Grove, Minn.

"Many complimentary remarks were heard. The most common remark was, 'It was such a down-to-earth play, serious yet with a great deal of clean humor.' Our audience was very attentive and greatly appreciated the humor."

L. Speer, High School, Ft. Payne, Ala.

"This, after years of coaching the senior play, was the most rewarding and satisfying one I have ever done. I felt it was clever and funny enough to appeal to the general public, yet there was an underlying theme that is timely, meaningful and wholly worthwhile. My cast loved it and neither of us tired of it after weeks of practice. Our audience felt this play was by far the best we have ever done."

C. Lewis, High School, Braham, Minn.

"This community enjoyed the play because it teaches a lesson and has sound construction besides being simple and easy to understand. The audience laughed at the charming humor and paid close attention to the interesting and human story."

E. Manchester, High School, Graettinger, Ia.

"This play was one of the best we have ever produced. The audience reaction was excellent and many commented to the effect that we had 'left something to think about.' There were a lot of laughs and several times there were tears. The cast loved the play too and interpreted their parts with enthusiasm."

W. Nawyn, Cicero, Illinois

"A worthwhile play with more content to it than most comedies. It was humorous but not zany, clean but not stuffy. The cast enjoyed their parts and we received many favorable comments."

E. Elmquest, High School, Fremont, Mich

"The reaction to our production of THE FAMILY NOBODY WANTED was excellent. The cast enjoyed their parts very much. Please give us more plays with as fine a flavor."

K. Taylor, High School, Philadelphia, Pa.

"THE FAMILY NOBODY WANTED was enthusiastically received. I think it's one of the nicest plays for high school presentation that I've ever read. I wanted to do it as soon as I saw the script. Everyone was lavish with praise for its humor, gentleness and pertinent message."

L. Jones, High School, Forest, Ohio

"This play had a background with a meaning upon which one could build. The only suggestion I can make is that I wish more plays of this type were available."

Miss M. L. Meyn, Benton Harbor High School, Benton Harbor, Mich.

"It was one of the finest plays that I've had the privilege to work on for years because the message was such a powerful one of brotherhood. I feel that THE FAMILY NOBODY WANTED is very timely. The dialogue is so natural and the incidents are so varied, and it builds to an excellent climax. One of our faculty members summed up saying, 'It was one of the finest stories ever seen on the stage.'"



NANETTE FABRAY,
who played the role
of Helen Doss.



LEW AYRES,
who played the role
of Carl Doss.



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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SELECTING THE HIGH SCHOOL PLAY

By DON H. POSTON

VETERAN directors of high school dramatics may smile wryly as they read the title of this article because there is no set formula on how to select a play that will lend itself successfully to amateur production. We may take university courses on all aspects of the theater; but in a given high school drama situation we invariably learn more by doing. It is our ingenuity, our deriding-do, and our constant trial and error experimentation that cause us to bring our respective communities unusual yet worthwhile plays at the high school level.

The activities of a high school dramatic coach may be hectic but rarely dull. He must be making continual decisions — not the least important of which is: "What shall be my next play?" This is the eternal question that confronts both the beginner and the veteran director in the high school. Even successful productions do not necessarily solve the riddle since many teachers after scoring a hit show are discouraged as to what they can possibly come up with next that won't be something of a let-down in comparison. My own observation (after nine years of dramatic directing in three different school systems) is that once you have finally decided on your play and gotten it cast, you seem more than halfway toward getting your production staged. Of course you will have endless hours of rehearsal and scenery work ahead, but somehow selecting and casting the play always seems half the battle.

Drama departments of many universities often compile lists of plays suitable for high school production; and many of the publishers of plays and speech textbooks do the same. Certainly we can study these lists for ideas and likewise learn what other high school directors are doing and have done. However, the glowing recommendations of others may not always be the tailor-made solution to our problem of finding the right play to produce at a particular time, in a particular situation, and with particular talent that could be strikingly different from what we had last year or may have coming up for next year.

It goes without saying that to be familiar with varied play scripts we should read quite widely and keep up with the latest on stage, screen, and television. To get the most out of our reading, however, we should not rush through too many plays at the same time (which is often one of the unavoidable necessities for fulfilling the requirements of a college drama course). When too many scripts are perused too closely together, we may well find ourselves too saturated

to respond fully to the charm or spell that a certain script could have when read more carefully. This saturation I have touched upon does not only apply to reading but to the witnessing of drama as well. In this age of drive-in theaters with triple features, and television with its endless original plays and late movies, the public is glutted with entertainment. There is a situation almost apropos to the song title, "Everything's Been Done Before." Yet this saturation (and limited retention) of entertainment is an important reason why we as high school directors should strive to produce plays that are different and worthwhile if we are ever going to get our potential audience away from their TV sets for two hours of flesh and blood theater.

Besides reading profusely, the drama director should build up his own library of plays that both appeal to him and that may likewise be potentials for high school production. There are several anthologies of plays that could be in such a collection. My own preference, however, is for the paper-backed setting editions. This may be a personal whim on my part, but somehow it seems that the illustrations, prompt book directions, and staging diagrams found in an acting edition give the reader more of a theatrical feel of the play than he finds in a cloth-bound anthology with its two columned pages designed primarily for reading rather than staging. I suggest owning copies of the plays you would really like to do some day rather than just borrowing them, inasmuch as you may desire to re-read certain of these scripts several times before making your final choice during a particular school term.

Many times a play when first glanced over seems prohibitive to stage on several counts; yet two or three years later you may find just the student for the difficult leading role; together with your stage crew you overcome production problems — and your once hazy dream becomes a reality. Several of our outstanding productions here at Holmes High School were plays that I had originally acquired during the summers of 1948 and 1950 while studying at Columbia University in New York. In the years that followed I have considered most of them for staging when I felt I had the right people at my disposal to do them adequately. In the high school theater one must often follow hunches. Sometimes an almost sixth sense seems to tell us when the time is right to tackle a particularly ambitious production.

The amount of anguish we go through in making our play selections is determined by the number of major productions we stage annually. Incredible as

it may seem, the fewer full-length plays we produce per year the more difficult it is to make our selections. This is true because if we are doing only one or two major productions during a school term we feel that they must be outstanding, distinctive, and different. On the other hand, if a school is going to put on as many as four or more shows a year, the probability is that at least half of them will be the traditional high school play type of fare concerned perhaps with teenage problems of dating, school activities, and parents.

For a challenging high school dramatic program the director must carefully evaluate and re-evaluate his student talent each fall, as well as his backlog of playscripts. He then endeavors to select a play different from his recent productions yet within the acting capa-



Dracula proved to be a good choice for production by Troupe 154.

bilities of his students on hand. Here as in professional theater casting is the big thing. If the director is aiming for a prestige production, he must have someone in mind for the leading role when he selects the play. If another student seems more outstanding in the tryouts, so much the better since the director can always alter his original decision. Unlike a college drama department, the high school director can rarely announce a year or two in advance what specific productions will be given. Sometimes a promising high school junior (whom the director can visualize in a distinctive dramatic role the following year) may not return in the fall. All too often young people of this age may move away, marry, go into industry or the Armed Forces despite their potential dramatic abilities.

The maturity in both voice and physical appearance of available masculine talent for any given school year is always one of the deciding factors as to how ambitious a production the director should undertake. It should also be

borne in mind that most plays originally produced professionally have men outnumbering the women in their casts often in the proportion of three to one. The proportion of girls to boys in most high school dramatic clubs is usually just the opposite. High school girls are generally more mature and more adaptable to older roles than are average high school boys. While you may not always have an "Heiress" or a "Victoria Regina" every year among your feminine talent, you will probably find girls capable of doing an adequate acting job in almost any play you may produce on your high school stage—providing you have first located the right boys for the male roles.

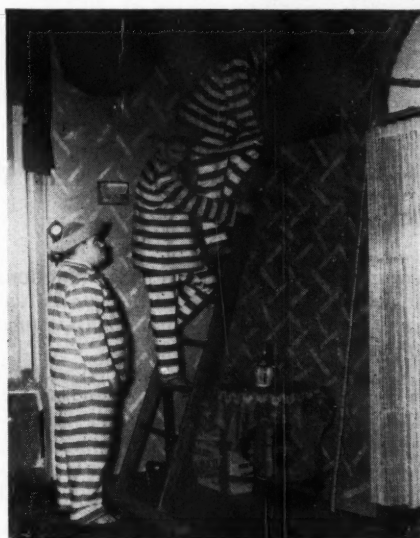
If the director intends to do unique plays at the high school level, he must train and maintain an excellent make-up crew. Theatrical make-up skillfully applied is probably more of an essential for the high school production than for the legitimate stage, because professional actors usually portray roles nearer their own age. Unless students are properly made up with correct foundations, highlights, shadows, wigs, crepe hair, they will not be completely convincing in their roles no matter how well they act them.

Much of the effectiveness of good make-up will be lost if the play is illuminated only in harsh white light. Colored lighting of the appropriate tints is necessary for both your make-up and scenery to be believable. Glaring white light can destroy both the illusion and the mood of an otherwise ambitious theatrical production. If your school's lighting equipment is so limited that it contains nothing but a few rows of white light bulbs, these can be wrapped in squares of colored theatrical gelatine (in the correct shades) and secured with scotch tape. Though this is a somewhat crude method of colored stage lighting, it will give artistic results and hold up for three or four performances. Lighting and make-up must be effective if the director is going to aim for anything beyond the traditional high school farce.

In searching for plays the director must keep in mind his stage facilities and how they can be used most advantageously. All of which recalls a comment made by a friend of mine back in New York during the summer of 1950 when we had gone behind the scenes to see how the Broadway production of the opera, *The Consul*, was staged. As we were shown the vast amount of cables, switchboards, and lighting equipment, my friend exclaimed, "After seeing what is accomplished with all this equipment, my hat is off to the high school dramatic coach who achieves similar effects on his own stage with virtually nothing!" Thus the dramatic director must be both resourceful and imaginative if he is to capture some of the flavor of a Broadway original.

This naturally brings up the question as to whether plays that have been pro-

duced in professional theater should be selected by the director, or should he generally rely on plays written primarily for high school students. I suggest that the creative dramatic coach should stick to professionally written scripts whenever possible. Even the average Broadway or London play gives you more to work with because the script has been tested, perhaps rewritten, and it is at least passable theater. Naturally we shall have to search for plays that are suitable. Many are objectionable because of over-sophistication, while others are not worth the effort to produce. Here at Holmes High we have had successful productions of plays that originally made their Broadway debuts in the twenties and thirties. I refer to shows like *Berkeley Square*, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Night Must Fall*, *Kind Lady*, *Captain Applejack*, and *Dracula*. The most recent play we have done was *My Three Angels* which originally opened in New York in 1953; and



Troupe 154's production of *My Three Angels* featured a live snake.

our oldest script, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, was first staged in 1908.

Many teachers are afraid that a certain play may not go over with their particular audience. My advice is to find out by doing. Aim high and stage the shows which are challenging and different from the run-of-the-mill high school play. You can always fall back on the "Dizzy Aunt Lizzie" sort of stuff if you have to, but if you start out at that level you may lose your nerve to try anything really worthwhile.

For two years prior to World War II I worked as theater manager for a chain of second-run motion picture theaters in Columbus, Ohio. It is my impression that the audience for an evening performance of a high school play is comparable to the average movie theater audience. Both consist of students, parents, alumni, and friends of varied ages.

If we consider then this similarity, we should doubtless be able to do plays which are as mature as the photoplays, providing they are entertaining. In this capacity we high school directors are a bit more like movie producers than are subsidized college drama departments, in that we must both entertain and elevate our audience—and above all, make them want to come back for more. At Holmes High some of our best theater patrons are alumni and parents of alumni, as well as several groups active in church dramatics. After these people saw one of our shows they became interested and keep returning.

The outstanding high school production should make the theater patron feel better for having attended whether we have made him laugh, or cringe with terror; whether we have brought a lump to his throat, a tear to his eye, or a spiritual uplift to his heart. The high school play should have both refreshing plot and good characterization. Characterization alone is not enough; there must be conflict; something must happen. A successful production should have plenty of physical action and cinematic tempo. Its setting and costuming should be visually pleasing and in the mood of the play.

The type of play should be varied. In my experience with twenty full-length plays and forty one-acts I have found that light comedy is highly enjoyed at the moment and new students are always saying "let's do a comedy." Yet it has been the serious plays like *Willow and I* and *Death Takes a Holiday*, and the thrillers like *Dracula* and *Black Flamingo* that people talk about years later. Therefore a well staged drama or melodrama with some comic relief will almost always make a more lasting impression on your audience than will a superbly staged farce or drawing-room comedy. Select shows that you feel are unusual enough to be remembered for your major productions.

Try to make each play distinctive. If you can afford them do not shy away from costume shows. Both boys and girls love to wear costumes and portray different persons from themselves in another land or era. We emphasize authenticity of props and costumes at Holmes because (as I wrote in my article in *DRAMATICS* of two years ago) we record the highlights of each play on colored 16 mm motion picture film. Perhaps our most authentic prop was in our last year's production of *My Three Angels* when we actually showed Adolphe, the snake. I was able to borrow a small South American boa constrictor for the play. This reptile not only played his part to the hilt, but added extra empathy to this hilarious yet poignant comedy, particularly in the sequence where the snake is seemingly lost.

Through careful planning we were able to do *Dracula* (normally a three-set

(Continued on page 31)



Photo by Photo-Art Studio

Thespian Helen Harding Aldisert

THESPIAN of the MONTH

Helen Harding Aldisert

WHEN THE color photo of Mrs. Helen Harding Aldisert, Thespian Troupe 1160, fronted the magazine, *AMERIKA*, in August 1957, the influence of the National Thespian Society became indeed international in scope. But first the curtain should be opened on a flash-back to 1950 when Helen developed an interest in becoming a Thespian at The Andrews School for Girls in Willoughby, Ohio.

Helen's delicate beauty and unfathomable air of gentleness set her apart early. Everything she touched seemed glorified, and she was signaled out for honors in the residence hall where she became president, and in the academic and vocational classrooms where she stood highest in her class with a point average of 3.71. Aside from her interest in drama, Helen was active in athletics. She was vice-president of the Andrews Athletic Association, and made the varsity basketball team.

Endued with the longing to become a nurse, Helen majored in home economics but she devoted much of her extra-curricular time to working in the school theater. Soon she earned sufficient points to become a charter member of Thespian Troupe 1160.

In the supporting role of Dr. Sully in *Double Door*, Helen gave expression to her absorption in the medical profession. Her tremendous depth of character and sympathetic nature had full play in her interpretation of the lead role in the drama based on John Keats' *Ode on a Gre-*

cian Urn. Other theatrical productions in which she participated included a variety show and Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*.

Further honors came to Helen in 1955 when she was asked to impersonate Mrs. Margaret St. John Andrews in a portrayal of the latter's life on Founder's Day. This is the highest honor that Andrews School has offered any student. Dressed

in a duplicate of the blue gown and ermine cloak worn by Mrs. Andrews in her portrait, Helen was seated in a frame in a draped box to the right of the stage. After a black-out, the curtains on stage opened on Helen in a nineteenth century setting as the beloved founder reminiscing about the events leading to the endowing of Andrews School. Then as in a dream, she viewed the development that has taken place in the school since its establishment in 1910.

In college Helen's achievements were soon recognized, and she was listed in *Who's Who in Universities and Colleges in The United States*. Just before her graduation, her forensic ability was put to a severe test, when as a student nurse at St. John's College in Cleveland, Helen competed against fellow students in school and city speech contests to become Miss Student Nurse of Cleveland. Later, against much stiffer competition in a state-wide contest last year, Helen was acclaimed Miss Student Nurse of Ohio.

Subsequently, the February 1957 issue of *COSMOPOLITAN* devoted six pages of text and eleven photos to showing Helen in her actual role of student nurse and R.N. This picture essay does much to reveal Helen's love for suffering humanity and her intense desire to relieve the anxiety of children in the hospital.

During the photographing of more than two hundred test pictures which were taken for *COSMOPOLITAN*, Helen

(Continued on page 30)

ATTENTION THESPIAN SPONSORS!

With this article *DRAMATICS* continues its new series. Your editor is very much interested in publishing, if material is available, a one page biography of graduate Thespians who are becoming nationally known in their chosen professions. Their noteworthy work need not necessarily be in theater.

Of course we prefer the articles written by our sponsors, but if outlined facts are presented to this office, we'll write the article. We are interested in the following: achievements while in high school, achievements in college or university, graduate study achievements in the chosen profession.

Physical requirements are as follows: length of article, 800 words; manuscript, typewritten, double column, one side of paper, photograph, sharp, clear, black and white contrast, size: 9 1/2 by 7 3/4.

Articles submitted are accepted only for possible publication. Final decisions concerning qualifications for this distinct honor rests with the editor.



Leslie Irene Cogger

SO YOU WANT TO READ ALOUD!

By LESLIE IRENE COGGER

exhilarating at the same time. Try reading Weaver's lines as though the idea has just come to you that a person could take a leaping dive into all that moonlight just the way you dive into Pearson's Hole from the old tree stump. Fun, isn't it? Or maybe you will prefer this bit of writing:

Jis' blue, God,
Jis' blue.
Ain't prayin' exactly jis' now,—
tear blind, I guess,
cain't see my way through.
You know those things
I ast for so many times,—
maybe I hadn't orter repeated like
the Pharisees do;
but I ain't stood in no market-place,
it's jis' 'tween me and you.
And you said, "Ast," . . .
somehow I ain't astin' now,
And I hardly know whut to do.
Hope jis' sorter left, but Faith's still
here,—
Faith ain't gone, too . . .
I know how 'tis,— a thousand years
is as a single day with you.
And I ain't meanin' to tempt you with,
"If you be —"
and I ain't doubtin' you.
But I aint prayin' to-night, God,—
Jis' blue.

Nothing seems to be going right. Nothing is going wrong exactly, but you aren't happy. Somehow all those things you've always believed in don't seem so real tonight. Did you ever feel that way? "Jis' blue, God, jis' blue." Try reading these lines. As you catch the mood of the author even your body reacts to the dejection. The muscles lose their tautness and you sag all over. How differ-

ently you read this poem from the one above.

Whereas before you were not only sensing the joy of living in your whole being, your body and your mind, now you feel a quiet depression falling upon you. Where before you were seeing the moonlight like a pool of water and sensing it gliding over your body, seeing the stars about you as white sparkling foam, now you are conscious only of an inner feeling, of no outward impressions. All of these sensations are part of your reading. As you respond to the mood of the writer, your reading takes on color. As you relive the sights, the sounds, the tug of muscles and react to them as you read, you share these images with your hearers.

One poem you will read slowly, another with a quicker pace. Read this one:

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have
missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me.

Can you see Jenny jumping from that chair to reach up to your cheek? You are old, you are sad and weary, but what if you are? The beautiful Jenny kissed you. The tempo changes in this poem, doesn't it? The slower pace with which you enumerate all your ills gives way to a pause as you reverse your line of thinking and then with quickened pace you exult in the remembrance that Jenny kissed you.

(Continued on page 28)

WHETHER it is "read me another one" from your kid brother or the applause of the high school assembly audience ringing in your ears, it is good to hear. And reading aloud is fun. Just as it is a pleasure to share the latest joke or an interesting experience with your friends or to play your part in a dramatic production, it is rewarding to share with them a short story, a bit of lyric poetry, or the "golden trashery of Ogden Nashery."

People are discovering how stimulating oral reading can be when an artist like Charles Laughton or Emlyn Williams reads from the Bible, Shakespeare, Shaw, or Dickens. The truth is many had never discovered the riches in the works of these writers until their exciting words were brought thrillingly alive by gifted readers.

If you want to join the fun, take a poem that you like and read it. Try this one by John V. A. Weaver:

Say — listen —
If you could only take a bath in moonlight!

Hey! Can't you just see yourself
Take a runnin' dive
Inta a pool o' glowin' blue
Feel it glidin' over you
All aroun' and inta you —

Grab a star — huh? —
Use it for soap;
Beat it up to bubbles
And white sparklin' foam —
Roll and swash —

Gee!

I just like to bet
You could wash your soul clean
In moonlight!

How gay John V. A. Weaver must have felt to write this lilting ditty. Can't you just see him imaginatively reach up and grab a star. And that plunge into the blue! Remember how it is to dive into the swimming hole and feel that cold water slide over your body, chilling and



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The Beginning: From "Black Face" To "The Black Crook"

By DELWIN B. DUSENBURY

FOREWORD

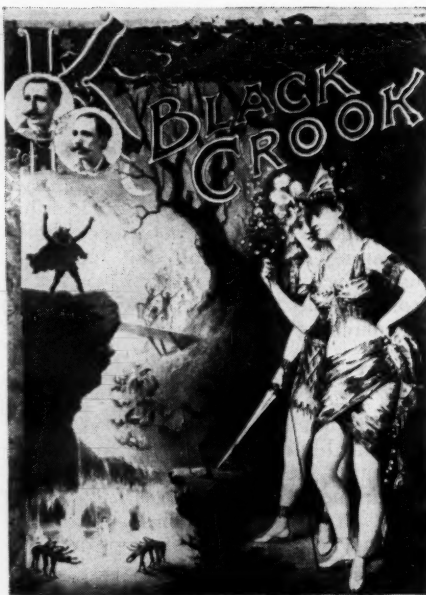
In July 1957, seventy per cent of the major Broadway productions were musical presentations, indicating the longevity, vitality and popularity of the musical theater today. While this proportion is not typical of the regular season, despite our air-conditioned age, O'Neill, Miller, Williams and others depart from the theater scene during the summer; whereas, the musical production attracts audiences on Broadway and in the numerous summer theaters throughout the country.

Other than Cecil Smith's Musical Comedy in America (New York, 1950), no single volume records the background, development and tradition of this popular theater form. Even the term, "musical comedy," is somewhat fallacious, so that for this series I have adopted the general term "musical theater."

The memoirs of the many fascinating personalities associated with the musical theater — my major source — have provided an embarrassment of riches for the series which will offer a survey of the foreign prototypes and the subsequent American development of the extravaganza, the comic opera, the operetta, the vaudeville, the revue, the musical comedy and the musical play. A final article will deal with production problems.

I am especially grateful for the assistance of George Freedley and his able staff of the New York Public Library Theater Collection in making available not only photographs, but also many valuable scrap books, letters, and clippings. I hope that the series will be sufficiently informative and stimulating to encourage directors to include this gay form of theatrical entertainment in their future production schedules.

WHEREVER there is theater, the desire for gaiety, spectacle, and music is as significant as the more serious types of theatrical presenta-



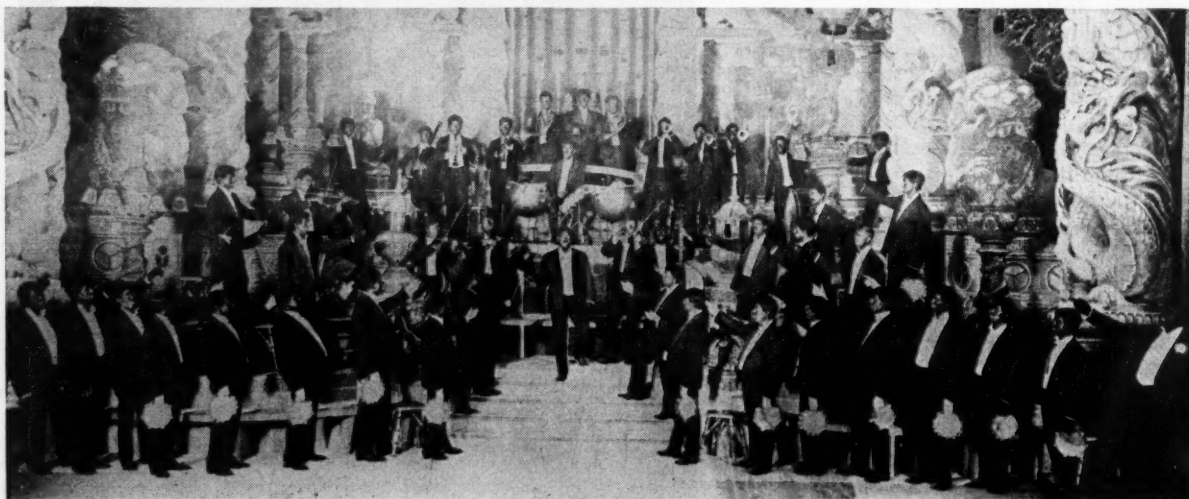
A poster of the 1868 revival of *The Black Crook*, America's first spectacular musical production as presented by the Kralffy Brothers, showing the elaborate scenes and the "daring" costumes.

tions. From its beginnings, the theater has always found a place for song, dance, and spectacle. From this desire the musical theater of today has developed. Furthermore the American musical theater represents far more exciting and unique innovations in staging, lighting, dramaturgy, and production than its counterpart — the spoken drama. Like its foreign antecedents, the musical theater provides a strong impetus for designers, directors, and writers, in cooperation with the composer, to experiment and explore new means of attracting theater audiences. Both the professional and the non-professional theater are re-discovering the musical theater as a rich and ample field for experimentation and for exciting productions.

The American musical theater has a varied and devious parentage which includes the Italian opera (*opera buffa*), the French *opera comique*, burlesques, burletta, extravaganzas, and comic opera — all English musical theater forms. Probably the basic origin may be traced back to the sixteenth century and the Italian *commedia dell'arte* — the form of improvised farcical comedy with stereotyped characters presented by travelling companies in Italy, France, England, and Spain. One of the sections of the scenario used by these companies was known as the *burle*. The *burle* was the practical joke, and the antics of the *commedia dell'arte* comic servants known as *zanni* in the *burla* was not too far removed from the actions of such contemporary "zanies" of the musical theater as Bobby Clark, Danny Kaye, and Bert Lahr, or television's Sid Caesar and Milton Berle, or such stars of yesterday as Harrigan and Hart, Eddie Foy, DeWolfe Hopper, and Weber and Fields.

Another of the *commedia dell'arte* characters was Arlecchino or Harlequin. This character served as the inspiration for the English actor, John Rich, who, in 1715, introduced the Harlequinade, or English pantomime with elaborate costumes, topical songs, and fantastic scenery. John Rich, as manager of Covent Garden Theater, was instrumental also in introducing another form of musical theater — the ballad opera, which even today, is enjoying a phenomenal success in New York under the title of *The Three Penny Opera*. Rich produced the original source, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) with music arranged by John C. Pepusch, a Prussian. The music consisted of an overture and a series of popular folksongs with new words written for them.

The ballad opera form proved to be extremely popular with London theater audiences. At that time many of the smaller London theaters were unable to present major productions due to the



The opening scene of Primrose and West's Mammoth Minstrels (1896) as an example of the elaborate scenery and the size of the company — a far cry from the four man Virginia Minstrels in 1842.

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Licensing Act so that they turned to the ballad opera and another form derived from the *burla* known as *burlettas*. Legally, any piece with three acts and at least five songs was a burletta and could be produced without violating the law. The burletta, often called "opera's poor relation," not only provided an impetus for the musical theater, but also served as the outlet for the talents of the prolific James R. Planche (1796-1880), who utilized mythology and fairy tales in a series of pantomimes and extravaganzas popular both in London and in New York. Henry J. Byron (1834-1884) adapted the form for his burlesques of leading theatrical successes of the day. These burlesques were produced with song and dance by the eccentric Madame Vestris and her charming husband, Charles Matthews, at their Olympic Theater.

While a period of some 250 to 300 years may seem to be a vast era to cover in as many words, the seeds of America's musical theater can be attributed to the sixteenth century Italian *commedia dell'arte* and its progeny cultivated by John Rich, John Gay, James Planche, Byron and Vestris.

The Beggar's Opera was in the repertory of the first English companies to appear in the colonial American theater. At the same time acrobats, rope-dancers, sleight-of-hand artists, bell ringers, puppet shows, and singers introduced the *commedia dell'arte* spirit into America's

early theater diet. As early as 1736 in Charleston *The Devil to Pay*, a ballad opera, was presented. America's first light opera, *The Disappointment*, was written in 1767. After the American Revolution and the War of 1812 patriotic pageants with music and spectacle were presented. Early in the nineteenth century New York's Park Theater and Philadelphia's Chestnut Street Theater were the scene of numerous ballad operas, pantomimes, and ballets. In addition, with the establishing of several summer "garden" theaters, New York soon had a regular source of light musical entertainment.

In 1836 William Mitchell (1798-1856) came to America from England to manage New York's Olympic Theater where, for some ten years with his clever and versatile company, he made fun of the serious plays and carried on the English tradition of the burletta, the burlesque, and the extravaganza. When Fanny Ellsler, the famous European ballet dancer, had appeared at the Park Theater in her ballet, *La Tarentule* (May 1840), Mitchell presented his company in a burlesque titled *La Musquito!* The Olympic was identified with the presentation of many Planche extravaganzas, and when Mitchell's failing health caused its closing, one critic described it as "synonymous with gaiety and beauty." In 1850 the jovial John Brougham opened his own theater with a series of farces and burlesques

interspersed with song and dance in the Mitchell tradition, but the vogue, at least for the time being, was over. Mitchell's theater became the home of the Fellow's Minstrels — a representative of one of the most significant developments in America's musical theater.

As early as 1800 comic songs had been sung in black-face during circus performances and between the acts at the theaters. Thomas D. Rice had won his immortal place in theater history, as well as in sociology textbooks, by introducing a fantastic negro character in song and dance with the words,

"First on de heel tap, den on
de toe, Ebery time I wheel
about, I jump Jim Crow."

In 1833, one year later, he introduced the "Ethiopian Opera," and the road was cleared for the development of the only indigenous form of theater America has contributed to world theater — the minstrel show.

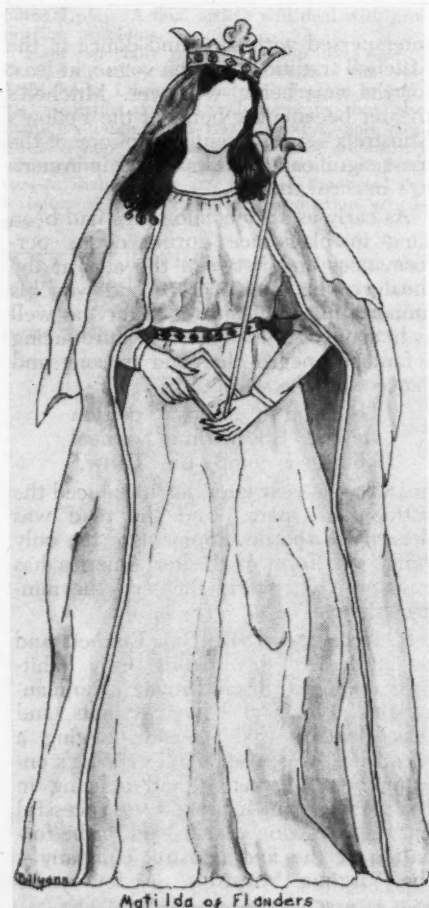
In December 1842, Dan Emmett and his fiddle with his friends, Billy Whitlock, a banjoist, Frank Brower, who manipulated a pair of bone castanets, and Dick Pelham, shaking and banging a tamourine, presented a full evening's entertainment of singing and dancing in "black-face," which proved so successful that the following year it lead to the formation of the first minstrel company — The Virginia Minstrels. A few years

(Continued on page 27)

From Matilda of Flanders To Eleanora of Aquitaine

By CHARLES R. TRUMBO
and POLLYANN

WITH THE coronation of Elizabeth II of England and the marriage of Grace Kelly to the Prince of Monaco, the world has again shown an active interest in pomp and royal splendor. Broadway plays, Hollywood motion pictures, television and radio have from time to time broken away from the Atomic Age, turned back the pages of history to the less hurried and more tranquil atmosphere of story-book courts—peopled with kings, queens,



Matilda of Flanders

knights, and ladies. It is to the tired but still enthusiastic director with a period costume playscript in his hand; to the wardrobe mistress or members of a costume committee; and to the future playwright who may bring to life again those colorful characters of history that we offer our "bit" toward authenticating the dress of royalty.

Matilda of Flanders was born about the year 1031. Being a legitimate descendant of the royal line, she was very carefully educated. Among her many accomplishments she was particularly famed for her skill in ornamental needlework. In that age this was considered one of the most important and desirable accomplishments that princesses and ladies of high rank could possess.

With the conquering of England by a native-born Frenchman, Duke William of Normandy, later known as William the Conqueror of England, a new influence began to show in the dress of the people. Englishmen adopted the strange manners of the French. Their speech and behavior as well as their character and deeds showed the foreign influence. Their fashion of dress became fantastic for the times with garments shortened to the knee. Their heads were shorn, and their beards shaved except for the upper lip, on which they wore long moustaches. Fourteen years before his conquest of England, William, Duke of Normandy, had married Matilda, daughter of the Earl of Flanders. They came to the English throne with years of successful sovereignty behind them.

The royal mantle that Matilda wore on her wedding day, garnished with jewels, and the one worn by her husband, William, together with his helmet, were long preserved in the treasury of the cathedral of Bayeux. However, we do not know how they looked or how they were made.

Matilda's own great work, the Bayeux tapestry, carefully pictured the chronicle of William's conquest of England. It was considered by authorities as the most remarkable achievement in the craft of needlework that was ever executed by royal hands. This tapestry gives us a picture of Matilda's own costume. She wears a robe simply gathered around her throat. A flowing veil falls from the back of her head over her shoulders and is held by a circlet of gems. Her face is beautiful and delicate. Her hair falls in waves around her throat. With one hand she holds her drapery and a book. She has her scepter in the other hand.

Matilda of Scotland was the only Scottish princess ever to share the throne of a king of England. She became the bride of Henry I on November 11, 1100. A miniature showed the queen dressed in a royal mantle of scarlet, lined with fur. It covers the knees and is very long. The mantle is square to the waist. A cordon of scarlet and gold with a long tassel passes through two gold knots. She



Adelicia of Louvain

holds the cordon in her left hand. She wears a tight girdle of dark blue, buttoned down the front with gold. Her sleeves fit close to the arms, and are scarlet like the mantle. A white veil is arranged in a square on the forehead, and is surmounted by a gold crown, formed of three large trefoils. Gold "oreillettes" appear beneath the veil on each side of her cheeks. The veil flows behind her shoulders with lappets. She sits on a carved stone bench and beside her is a scarlet cushion figured with gold leaves. This cushion is in the form of a woolpack, but has four tassels of gold and scarlet. A piece of figured cloth is hung at her back.

There was a statue of Matilda of Scotland in the Rochester Cathedral that formed the pilaster to the west door. A statue of King Henry I, her husband, formed another one. The hair of the queen fell over each shoulder in two long plaits below her knees. Her garments were long and flowing, and she held an open scroll of parchment in her hand.

Two illuminated portraits of Henry I showed him clad in a very close dress with his regal mantle folded about him. His shoe and stocking were all of one piece and the toe was pointed. His crown was ornamented with three trefoils and his scepter was a staff with an ornamented head. He was seated on a stone bench with an architectural design. He was seen in the second portrait in the robes he wore at the bridal coronation of his second queen, Adelicia of Louvain.

(Continued on page 26)

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"Captivating . . . enormously engaging . . . We recommend it" — Coleman, N.Y. Mirror

"A dandy little musical . . . just about what the doctor ordered," — Variety

BY HEX has been produced with great success by a number of high schools and community theater groups during the past season. A particularly successful production was given by the Catholic Theater Guild of Richmond, Virginia. Edith Lindeman, reviewing this production, called BY HEX "one of these delightful gems . . . It appears to have been originally written by John Rengier and Howard Blankman for pro-

duction in and around Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It proved so successful that it was taken in to New York where it had a run of some months in an off-Broadway house . . . every song in BY HEX advances the story line . . . BY HEX does not call for operatic vocalists, so even those who are not primarily singers are more than adequate to the charming, lilting score."

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Photo by John Kraus

9 men, 5 women
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Books, \$1.15

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THE STORY is set in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and deals with the Amish folk. Jonas, a young Amish farmer, rebels against the restrictions of his people; he wants to wear red suspenders and buy a tractor—in a word, he wants to "go modern." The Bishop warns him he will be shunned if he does this; none of his people will be allowed to speak to him or recognize him in any way. Nancy, the Bishop's eldest daughter, is sad; she feels life has passed her by, and in a moment of unhappiness, she allows a non-Amish man to kiss her. The Bishop sees this, and warns Nancy that she too could be shunned. When Jonas buys his tractor, the Bishop shuns him, and Jonas, in a moment of uncontrollable rage denounces the Bishop for favoritism in failing to denounce Nancy when she, too, failed to keep one of the

strict Amish rules. The Bishop, in a scene of great emotional impact, is forced to shun both Jonas and Nancy. Lydia, Nancy's younger sister, is engaged to Eli, but under Amish law they can't get married until Nancy marries. And since Nancy is shunned, no Amish man may speak to her. So the logical solution is to bring Nancy and Jonas together. Lydia finds an old "hex" book that she thinks will help her do this, and while Eli isn't very hopeful, he's willing to help. When Jonas tries to run his tractor he has an accident and ends up in jail, where Nancy comes to see him. They realize their love for each other, and Jonas realizes he can't change over night; that at heart he's wholly Amish. Jonas and Nancy are once again accepted, and two weddings are in the offing.

DRAMATISTS PLAY

14 East 38th Street

THAT'S MY COUSIN

A delightful new comedy for high schools by Kurtz Gordon, author of **MONEY MAD, JUMPIN' JUPITER** and **HENRIETTA THE 8TH.**

8 men, 10 women and extras

1 interior.

Books, \$1.00.

Fee, \$25.

THE STORY centers around two cousins, Kitty Drake and Adele Warren, who inherit a dude ranch at Cross Roads Canyon, Colorado. Kitty, the more impetuous cousin, resigns her job and takes the first bus West. Her high hopes burst when she finds that the inheritance is a defunct ranch, but she's not daunted long. She determines to put the ranch on a paying-basis, and being a resourceful young lady, she looks about for the necessary capital and discovers it in Carleton Up de Graff, the local banker's son. In him Kitty finds a perfect foil for her enterprise. With Carleton as co-signer, she negotiates a loan at his father's bank and transforms her inheritance into an attractive dude ranch. To entice guests, Kitty names it The Uranium Dude Ranch and mails out brochures promising all guests who discover uranium a stake-it and take-it policy with the ranch claiming half. This brings on Sheriff Henshaw in the interests of the Post Office. Her brochures have been confiscated for false advertising. However,

an "ad" in a New York newspaper brings three young girls from Brooklyn and Harriet Baker, who is on a husband-hunting expedition. Adele arrives with her friend Laura Hunter to help Kitty in managing the ranch. Things look even brighter when Tullina La Gallimore, a TV actress, and her director, Kent Tyler, make reservations. Everyone is happy until Bramwell Up de Graff, the banker, storms into the lobby and accuses Kitty of inveigling his son to put his signature to the note. The first payment is due the following Monday and if it isn't paid, the bank will take over. But that's only one of Kitty's problems—her four guests came to the ranch to meet men and since there aren't any around, the girls are thinking of leaving. The schemes that Kitty concocts with Carleton's reluctant assistance turn into a boomerang. Even the hold-up she plans to give the girls a thrill, takes an unexpected turn. This delightful comedy has one chuckling situation after another, with a wholly unexpected surprise ending.

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THEATER



FOR

CHILDREN



FRIEDA E. REED

CHILDREN'S THEATER —
WHAT "THEY SAY"

(By High-School Producers)

HERE:

With any educational device or technique or procedure, certainly it is the expert in the field who should assume leadership and direction, but occasionally it seems a good idea to use the procedure of the opinion analyst to find out what "they think" and what "they say." This month's column is a random sampling of comments on Children's Theater by high-school producers in a large eastern suburban school. The sampling includes comments from administrators, elementary teachers, parents of audience members and producers, and finally the high-school student producers themselves. Let us hear what "they say."

Children's Plays are Stimulating

"These plays have a tremendous influence for good upon our children who receive stimulation for their own dramatic productions at the elementary level. Teachers and principals report that the plays also stimulate the reading of these children, particularly in the field of children's classics. We also find this experience a very fine one for high school students, who, through these dramatizations, are led to understand better various types and phases of childhood life. We are all impressed with the tremendous skill with which these plays are staged and presented, as well as the enthusiasm with which they are received by the children and their parents. My congratulations and thanks for this splendid contribution as a part of our school services."—J. H. T., Superintendent of Schools

Children May Experience Live Theater

"To the children who are now accustomed to watching television and the movies, the living theater offers an entirely new vista. Some of the young people in our community have attended legitimate theater on rare occasions, but the group is very small. Fortunately, through the work of the high school Thespian Troupe, even the youngest of our community children are introduced to live theater by being given an opportunity to see fairy tales come alive."—D. B. F., Elementary School Principal

Motivates Self-Expression

"The value of our high school Children's Theater in the community cannot be over-estimated. To the children seeing the stories they know so well brought



The Enchanted Prince, Troupe 1400, Roosevelt High School, Honolulu, Hawaii,
Grace W. McAlister, Sponsor.

to life before their eyes is a thrill which can only be realized by watching their faces as they view the play. . . . In my own family, my children, of ages six and ten, invariably come home from the plays, rig up costumes, and re-enact the story they have just seen. . . . Performance by students who not so long ago were the ages of the audience brings a togetherness that is reflected in the sparkle of the plays. . . . The fact that the plays are always so well attended shows that many other parents and children look forward to these plays as we do."—(Mrs.) A. B., Parent

Entertains and Teaches

"The value of our high school Children's Theater lies in the fact that it entertains the audience as well as stimulates thought and imagination. It teaches an appreciation of the living theater as part of our culture."—(Mrs.) E. B. H., Parent

Motivates Consideration of Others

"The student in high school lives a busy, intent life with a circle of friends whose age is the same as his own. It is a good mental exercise for the high school student to have to consider the child who will be his audience. The play must be real, spontaneous, and active. Thus to be able to entertain the younger children the high school student must get 'out of himself'; he must consider what will entertain the child, yet what will not frighten him. Consideration of others younger and older is a basic need for personality development."—(Mrs.) M. S., Parent of high school actor and technician

Children's Theater Demands Good Acting

"Acting in Children's Theater has proved to be a very valuable experience for me because the natural restlessness and short attention span of the audience make real demands on the actor: absolute concentration on the part, emphasis on strong movement, good projection of voice, and exercise of the imagination in interpretation. All of these demands are more challenging to the actor in children's plays than in productions for adult audiences."—J. A. G., Senior Thespian Actor

Children's Audiences Can Be Trusted

"There is no audience that is quicker to tell you just what they think of you than a children's audience. I enjoy playing to children because of their frankness. I know that when they say (either in words or by attention response) 'I loved it,' they really mean it, and are not just being polite. On the other hand, they are our most severe critics. As a result of their criticisms and reactions, we strive more and more toward perfection."—C. L., Junior Thespian

Children's Audiences Are Most Rewarding

"After working in Children's Theater for three years, and after having played a number of rôles in plays for adult audiences, I have found that although children's audiences are the more difficult, they are also the most rewarding. There is no reward for an actor like 'getting' a child audience and holding it. If I had to choose, I would always prefer to play in Children's Theater."—J. S., Junior Thespian

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T H E R E

Thousands of miles from the center of activity reported in the foregoing comments, at Roosevelt High School, Honolulu, Hawaii, "they say" very much the same thing about Children's Theater. Sylvia Hormann, reporting Troupe 1400's experiment with this type of production last year, says, "No matter how many plays for adults we could give, they could never be as rewarding in the same way as presenting a play to children."

It is evident that this Children's Theater project, under the direction of Troupe Sponsor, Grace W. McAlister, grew out of enthusiasm and was developed with ingenuity. The Troupe reporter says, "Work on the play started last spring, when we were first fired with the idea of using high school students to present a children's play. We chose the story theme of *Beauty and the Beast*. One of the students assumed the responsibility of writing the script, which we entitled *The Enchanted Prince*."

For this production, three students, under the direction of the Troupe Sponsor, were in charge. These students assumed the following positions: director, script writer and assistant director, and business and production manager. Rehearsals were held during study halls, before and after school, and on Saturday mornings.

Sylvia Hormann, who was script writer and assistant director, says, "Our able stage crew built simple but fairy-tale-ish sets including a fruit stand for the market scene, and a jewel tree for the garden of the beast. . . . Costumes presented some difficulty, especially when it came to the boys, but we were able to conjure up some capes out of curtains and skirts. The boys taking shop donated some



The Enchanted Prince, Troupe 1400, Roosevelt High School, Honolulu, Hawaii, Grace W. McAlister, Sponsor.



FULL-LENGTH PLAYS:

Abe Lincoln—New Salem Days
Adventures of Tom Sawyer
Alice in Wonderland
Beauty and the Beast
Cricket on the Hearth
Davy Crockett
Greensleeves' Magic
Hansel and Gretel
King of the Golden River
Lincoln's Secret Messenger
Magic Horn of Charlemagne
Nobody's Boy
Radio Rescue
Rama and the Tigers
Red Shoes
Rip Van Winkle
Secret of Han Ho
Sing Ho for a Prince
Snow Queen and the Goblin
Snow-White and the 7 Dwarfs

SHORTER PLAYS:

Crying Princess and the Golden Goose
Gift of the Drum
Master Cat (or Puss in Boots)
Mr. Bunch's Toys
Pagan Magic
Pirates!!
Rumpelstiltskin
Witch's Lullaby, The

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swords which were very effective. The girls wore their own peasant skirts and blouses in the market scene, and later on, in the Beast's garden, they wore their own gowns giving a rich and festive appearance. We used make-up for the beast and the witch, which while effective was modified so that neither one would look so horrible that the children would be frightened.

"We tried to create effective moods and atmosphere for the play by various lighting effects and suggestive music. Sad, eerie music, and dim blue lighting set the mood for Beauty's arrival at the Beast's garden; and these same effects were used for the remainder of the scenes in the garden at twilight. Using the same set, but with bright lighting and gay music, we were able to create a totally different mood for the Beast's court and for the wedding.

"Simple rhythmical movement was much used, and occasional dance sequences were employed where they seemed to convey the mood. This variety of movement appealed greatly to the children. Lively and expressive pantomime was used as much as dialogue. An especially effective scene was the wedding procession where we had the courtiers parade past the audience up to the stage. The children were thrilled to get this close-up view of the actors.

"The audience reaction was the most rewarding part of producing the play. The children showed great enthusiasm throughout the whole play, which lasted about an hour. They laughed frequently, and indulged in delighted terror at the witch. The scenes moved rapidly,

each one lasting little more than seven or eight minutes, and alternating between gay and sad scenes. It was most gratifying to hear the acting and flowing story rewarded by the excited childish giggles, the *Oh's* and *Ah's* of wonder, and the appropriate gasps of fright or sympathy."

The story is much the same, whether *Here* or *There*: There is no audience like a child audience. And, at the risk of sounding like a TV commercial, we start the year by saying to all Thespian Troupes: Try Children's Theater, and you won't ever be without it!



The Princess Marries the Page, Troupe 1309, Mount St. Mary's Academy, North Plainfield, N.J., Sister Mary Lucia, Sponsor.



Bernardine, Troupe 712, Batesville, Ark., High School, Charlote Cole, Sponsor.

BERNARDINE

Batesville, Arkansas, High School

THE HOUSE lights blink and dim, a center spot comes up on the red velvet curtain, and a young man steps into the light. He invites the audience into "a Halloween-world, with its own set of rules and a cock-eyed edge to laughter, where no adult can fully enter, ever"—the world of *Bernardine*.

I decided to do *Bernardine* while watching a group of boys giving some painfully characteristic imitations of our faculty members. As they joked back and forth, I realized this must have been what Mary Chase was thinking of when she wrote her delightful comedy about a gang of teenage boys who spend a great part of their time dreaming about an imaginary, infinitely desirable blonde "created" by Beau, the leader of the gang. Her name is Bernardine Crud, and she lives in a small town called Sneaky Falls, Idaho. She drives a baby-blue Cad and knows only one word—"Yes." One of the boys in particular, Buford "Wormy" Weldy, wants to find someone like Bernardine.

When not trying to keep up with Wormy's frustrations, Beau, Carney, Tub, Fudge, and Olsen find time to get into mischief in the lobby of one of the town's better hotels, and to discuss their philosophies at the Shamrock, the local hang-out.

In our production we used three different stage areas for the Shamrock, the Weldy apartment, etc., and changed scenes through lighting. For two street scenes we made a drop-curtain of ordinary tar paper and painted a street scene in perspective on the black background. This curtain was lowered in front of the other sets, and action took place on the stage apron.

I doubt that a cast could have enjoyed doing a play more. Perhaps they understood, all too well, some of the problems confronting the characters.

CHARLOTE COLE
Sponsor, Troupe 712

THE CURIOUS SAVAGE

Grand Haven, Mich., High School

OUR SENIOR play, *The Curious Savage*, was skillfully presented by the cast and enthusiastically received by the audience.

Ethel P. Savage, "The Curious Savage," is a friendly, lovable, and wealthy widow, who is trying to establish a "happiness fund." The money in her "fund" is to help people do the foolish things they have wanted to do all their lives. Her stepchildren have her committed to The Cloisters, a home for the mentally unstable. Mrs. Savage carries a large brown teddy bear with her at all times. While she is at The Cloisters, she meets five charming "guests": Hannibal, who thinks he is a violinist, but can't really play a violin; Fairy May, a very plain girl who believes she is beautiful; Mrs. Paddy, a woman who thinks she is an artist, but can't actually paint; Florence, a loving mother who has no son, but believes that a doll is her child; and Jeffrey, a real pianist who won't play the piano because he thinks people stare at an imaginary scar on his face. Mrs. Savage eventually proves her sanity, has her

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

Edited By EARL BLANK

money returned to her, and is discharged. The play leaves the audience with the feeling that maybe some of the people in the world really belong in a place like The Cloisters.

The characterization of the guests was the major challenge that we faced. It would have been easy to present the mentally unstable guests in a hilarious manner. We did not want our play to be a shallow production depending on laugh lines for success. Instead, we worked to develop warm, lovable characters with childlike simplicity governing their emotions and actions.

The staging of *The Curious Savage* presents a minor problem. The setting is the wing of a mental home that houses the patients in their final stage of treatment. The sitting room must appear friendly and cheerful, and yet show that the patients are not free to leave at will. We solved the problem by constructing airy crossed bars at the large bay window, using rope, glue, and black scene paint.

The presentation of *The Curious Savage* warmed the hearts of the audience as well as those of every cast member and director. We all enjoyed the long hours of work spent on making this cheerful and undying play a successful production.

ANNE SHEPARD
President, Troupe 1048

BLITHE SPIRIT

A. L. BROWN H. S., Kannapolis, N. C.

PRODUCING A farce so well known that definite characterizations are expected is a challenge to any high school group as well as to the director.

The ingenious plot of *Blithe Spirit* tells how novelist Charles Condomine invites



The Curious Savage, Troupe 1048, Grand Haven, Mich., Sr. High School, Hal Chastain, Sponsor.

BERNARDINE
CLEMENTINE
BLITHE SPIRIT
THE CURIOUS SAVAGE

into his placid country home an eccentric, breezy lady medium in order to learn the language of the occult. Little does Charles or his lovely second wife, Ruth, dream that the seance staged by the medium will summon back Charles' first wife, Elvira, who has been dead for seven years. But Elvira, still beautiful and mischievous, appears to torment Charles with memories of their days and nights together. Only Charles can see her, and Ruth is convinced that Charles is losing his mind until a vase is handed to her out of thin air. The first wife plans to get Charles into an automobile accident and make a ghost of him in order to make the spirit world more appealing to her. A mistake occurs and Ruth is killed in the automobile accident. She then returns in spirit form to join Elvira in plaguing Charles. How Charles manages to free himself from these two blithe spirits offers a hilarious conclusion to this wonderful and frolicsome farce.

The cast includes two males and five females. This offers a much greater opportunity for individual work by the director than would a play with a larger cast. The costumes are modern and offer no problem at all. The only problem in make-up would be that used by the spirits, but special spirit make-up may be obtained from Max Factor or Paramount Cosmetics Companies.

We painted our flats with two basic colors and paneled the walls to give it the impression of an English country home. The lower panel was painted a light brown while the upper panel was

painted a green; then the entire set was spattered. The woodwork was painted a dark brown.

Since this play requires quite a few special tricks at the curtain of the play, we had to spend quite a bit of time perfecting them. There is a list of suggestions concerning the tricks in the script. We knocked vases and books off the bookcase by means of seven or eight clothes hangers punched through the bookcase backing, and we were able to raise and lower the phonograph lid by the use of a fine wire which the audience could not see. The curtains over the French windows were allowed to fall by the use of rope running through pulleys. Pictures were allowed to fall by the releasing of a trigger from backstage. A vase and a piano scarf are pulled off the piano by means of a fish cord attached to the offstage end of the piano scarf.

The lighting in this play is very necessary to the spiritual effect to be desired. A green light should be forever present around the spirits each time that they enter. The lighting during the seance is also important for the effect of that scene. A suggested lighting plot in the London production is printed in the script.

Working out the show in all its details took three weeks of hard work, but the end result was well worth it. The audience and cast enjoyed it thoroughly, and I counted it as our most successful presentation in my three years as sponsor at our school. It was a sensational money-maker, and I highly recommend it to all high school groups.

GEORGE SPENCE
Sponsor, Troupe 1376

CLEMENTINE
Wayne, Mich., High School

A HILARIOUS comedy which takes place in the living room of the Mayor Kelly and his family makes *Clementine* an excellent high school play.



Clementine, Troupe 670, Wayne, Mich., High School, Letha A. Rice, Sponsor.

Clem, an only daughter of the Kelly's, loves football and likes only the boys on the gridiron. Fingernail polish, hair-dos, and elocution lessons make little difference to Clem—until her football hero plays spin-the-bottle with her and takes for his prize a hand-shake instead of the traditional kiss. Then all her innate female intuition starts bubbling. And this sixteen-year old tomboy drops her favorite nickname "Butch" to become a normal teen-ager, who recognizes the opposite sex as something worth consideration.

Besides a real, live appealing teen-age lead, this play offers excellent character roles in Abe, the houseman; Bertha, the housekeeper; Miss McNeill, who teaches elocution; and Miss Pringle, who is convinced that all teen-agers should be chloroformed until they are adults.

The set is one interior, easy to do since it is the living room of a modern average family. A box set can be used or a combination cyclorama with inserted doors and windows. Because of the nature of the stage, we used the latter.

Costumes are modern and make-up is not difficult since there are seven straight roles and only five character.

For the school who cannot afford an elaborate set or costumes, a school that must watch its budget, *Clementine* is an excellent selection. The idea of a girl who craves to become a member of the varsity football team is refreshing. The dialogue lives because it is right for the characters. High school students like to do it because it's "their kind of stuff." The audience likes it because it has a plot strong enough to hold interest, is highly entertaining, and good clean comedy.

SHEILA GNIFKE
Honor Thespian, Troupe 670



Blithe Spirit, Troupe 1376, A. L. Brown High School, Kannapolis, N.C., George Spence, Sponsor.

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Blithe Spirit, Samuel French, Inc., N. Y. C.
Clementine, Dramatic Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill.

Thespian Chatter

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

Troupe 1238

One of our most ambitious activities of the year was the presentation of an original pageant, *The Years That Built Our Nation*, to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the first settlement at Jamestown. Since we are only fifty miles from Jamestown, some observance in this Jamestown Festival year was a "must."

The pageant was in five scenes using narration, tableaux, music, and dancing: The Planting of the Cross At Cape Henry, The Marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, Trading with the Indians, The Arrival of the Maids from England, and The Founding of the House of Burgesses.

It was truly an all-school cooperative effort. All of the Thespians participated plus many other students under the guidance of a number of faculty members. The script was written by students in the history classes, music was by the vocal and instrumental music departments, dances by the physical education department, costumes by the home economics department, scenery by the art department and make-up, lighting, props, etc., and narrators and actors being furnished by the dramatics classes, Dramatic Club, and Thespian Troupe 1238.

It was such a success that we have been asked to repeat it in October for our P.T.A. Many of the roles will have to be recast, as a number of the members of the original cast were graduated in June. It will be well worth that effort, however, to honor that small group, who in 1607 planted the seeds of democracy that lead to our present United States of America.—*Thespian Scribe*

—O—

GLENDALE, CALIF.

Troupe 812

The Thespians at Glendale High had an active year in 56-57. The fall play, *The Rivals*, was the last one presented by drama coach Marion Underwood. Miss Underwood, better known as Pinkie to her students, retired in January after teaching drama at Glendale for thirty-two years, sponsoring the Thespian Troupe since its origin in 1947, and serving as Regional Director here in Southern California for many years. For weeks before the end of the semester Thespians tiptoed quietly and spoke in whispers as preparations were made for a surprise party honoring their departing friend. On the big night Pinkie stood speechless in the doorway as cameras flashed and drama students from many years back smiled fondly.

The second semester continued with the same wonderful success under our new coach. The spring play, *Out of the Frying Pan*, was rated by its record-breaking audience as "equal to any professional show." Glendale entered regional speech and drama contests and emerged with several awards. A costume party with the members arriving as titles of plays wound up a wonderful year.—*Gayle Hootman, Scribe*

—O—

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

Troupe 411

This year was an extremely exciting and eventful one for Northampton High School Dramatic Clubs. For the first time they produced a play for children, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. At first everyone was quite skeptical, firmly believing that attendance would be small. Contrary to expectations, this play was a great success and received national acclaim in THEATRE ARTS magazine. As an additional honor the members won special recognition for their fine acting when they presented the second act at the Regional Massachusetts High School Drama Festival. It never pays to be skeptical in advance.

The Thespians also had an eventful year. A very impressive formal initiation was presented to the student assembly, followed by a theater reading of *The Marriage Proposal* (there have since been four performances for professional organizations). In March the Thespians attended an entertaining and educational drama conference at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. We hope that next year's Thespians will have as successful a year.—*Sheila Byer, Vice-President*

—O—

ATHERTON, CALIF.

Troupe 1383

"While two eyes of blue, come smilin' through at me." . . . this touching refrain furnished the theme for the spring production of the Menlo Atherton High School Thespians. This was the most successful production of the five which were produced by Troupe 1383 during their 1956-57 season.

The play, *Smilin' Through*, was a delightful melodramatic comedy that touched every heart string. It's the story of an uncle's prejudice against the boy his niece wants to marry, since the boy's father was the murderer of his own sweetheart, the blue-eyed, beautiful Moonyeen Claire. The moral of the story is an important one to remember in life . . . "as long as there's love in your heart, there can be no hate or prejudice."



Anastasia. Troupe 520, Wm. Penn Sr. H.S., York, Pa., Margaretta Hallock Sponsor.

The stage was transformed into a quaint Irish garden with rose-covered trellises. To add sweetness, temper and flavor, the Irish dialect was used throughout. A most successful effort.—*Carol Ann Drury, President*

—O—

TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Troupe 817

Here is an idea! For the past two years Thespian Troupe 817 has held Open House for all former Thespians of Central High School. Sunday afternoon following Christmas has proved

1957 — REGIONAL CONFERENCES — 1958

ALABAMA	Alabama College, Montevallo, Florence Pass, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 258, Ensley High School, Birmingham, November 15, 16.
ARKANSAS	Arkansas State College, Jonesboro, Marie Thost Pierce, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 301, Marked Tree High School, April 19.
COLORADO	Colorado Springs High School, Homer L. Paris, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 759, November 9.
FLORIDA	W. R. Boone Sr. High School, Orlando, Paul M. Fague, Sponsor, Troupe 177, Program Chairman; Charles R. Trumbo, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 728, Bartow High School, March 8.
GEORGIA	Avondale High School, Avondale Estates, Hubert A. Jernigan, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 1128, April 11.
OHIO (Northwestern)	Memorial High School, St. Mary's, Lillian Codington, Sponsor, Troupe 629, Program Chairman; Florence Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, October 19.
OHIO (Southwestern)	Mariemont High School, Cincinnati, Mildred D. Davis, Sponsor, Troupe 1189, Program Chairman; Florence Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, November 2.
OKLAHOMA	Central High School, Tulsa, Iona Ballew Freeman, Sponsor, Troupe 817, Program Chairman; Maybelle Conger, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 822, Central High School, Oklahoma City, May 3.
WASHINGTON	University of Washington, Seattle, Jen Southworth, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 326, Central Kitsap High School, Silverdale, November 8, 9.
ILLINOIS	Lansing High School, Robert J. Phillips, Sponsor, Troupe 1672, Thornton Fractional High School, Calumet City, Program Chairman; Marion Stuart, Sponsor, Troupe 106, Champaign, and Rachel Whitfield, Sponsor, Troupe 233, Glen Bard High School, Glen Ellyn, Regional Directors.

the most desirable date for those returning home from college and other far-away places. The designated hours always extend into the evening, and since more "come and stay" than "come and go" a large home is used.

As we look at faces lighting up with happiness as old friends meet to relive memories, as we listen to the laughter and excited conversation, we know that all the work that went into this affair was worthwhile. Taking a quick look into our own future homecomings, we hope there will always be Thespian Open House and that we shall be there. — Linda Darrell, Secretary

—O—

WATSONVILLE, CALIF.

Troupe 863

There was a long, low whistle, the thundering sound of an approaching train, and a huge cardboard replica of an old steam engine came gliding onto the stage. Desperately the heroine flagged the train, thus saving Snorkey who was tied to the tracks. This was just one of the many fast moving scenes from the three act melodrama, *Under the Gaslight*, presented by our drama class in March. Those troupes who have never presented a melodrama shouldn't miss the fun of presenting one. We used stylized action which gave our drama class a different experience in acting. Adding to the



Teahouse of the August Moon, Troupe 589, John Regan Sr. High School, Houston, Tex., Patricia Cook, Sponsor.

atmosphere was our "Professor at the Steinway," who played various melodies from the "Gay Nineties," which corresponded to the different moods of the scenes.

We also carried out the "Gay Nineties" theme in our programs.

Following the melodrama our Thespian Troupe presented the Victorian thriller, *Angel Street*, in April. —Elizabeth Evertson, Secretary

—O—

ASHLAND, OHIO

Troupe 29

The first high school in the nation to produce the Rogers and Hammerstein Broadway hit musical, *The King and I*, Ashland's Thespians and music department put six weeks of concentrated work into their success.

"Hello, Young Lovers," "We Kiss in a Shadow," and "Shall We Dance?" are three of the popular songs from the well-known story of the English school teacher in the Siamese court.

Bald as Yul Brynner was Ashland's Jon Nico-demus, and dark as Siamese were his court in their "Texas dirt" powder make-up. The lavish costumes were from the original Broadway production's costumer; all scenery was designed and built by the Thespian properties commit-

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THEATER FOR CHILDREN, edited by Frieda E. Reed, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, High School. Contents: *Thespians Can Compete in Children's Theater*; *Director With Imagination, Training, and Devotion Develops Unique Project*; *Makeup for Children's Theater*; *"More Aids" to Children's Theater*; *Costuming the Children's Play*; *Scenery for Children's Theater*; *The Musical Play for Children*; *A Springboard for the Year's Program*. .60

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The Man Who Came to Dinner, Troupe 102, Springfield, Mo., Central Sr. High School, Charlie Jones, Sponsor.

tee. Elementary schools were the source of the king's many children, including twins.

The King and I was presented twice to overflowing houses, in a triumph of high school theatrics. It provided valuable experiences on a near-professional plane for the more than 150 students directly connected with its production. *Sandra Finberg, Scribe*

—0—

ST. CLAIR SHORES, MICH. Troupe 1725

Early in April there was a new word going around Lakeview Sr. High. The word was

"Thespian." Everyone was asking what the word meant. Then a very proud "Future Thespian" would go on to explain all about the National Thespian Society, and that it was for the advancement in the dramatic arts.

Our sponsor, who is Miss Susanna Mason, decided it would be nice if we could have our initiation in the evening, and a party afterwards. We all agreed. The date was set. It was to be Thursday May 2 at 8:00 P.M. The invitations were sent out to the parents of the students who were to be initiated, and the whole school and faculty were cordially invited. At last the time came; some of the students were quite nervous because they had to give the readings. But everything came off very smoothly. Afterwards we had punch and cookies. A few talented Thespians entertained us with their singing and their ability to play the piano. Everyone agreed the evening was not only enjoyable but also profitable. — *Florence Minjoe, Secretary*

—0—

NEWTON, IOWA

Troupe 377

The Newton Thespian Troupe 377 decided this year not only to promote dramatics, but also to be of as much service to the community and school as possible. Keeping this in mind, the club carried out two very successful service projects. The first was a fudge and candy sale in the Student Center of the school during lunch periods. Proceeds of this sale were given to a fund to help pay the hospital bills of a Newton High athlete who had been seriously injured while playing football. The second project was sponsorship of a dance after a basketball game. Thespians planned the dance and sold refreshments. Then all money made at the dance — over one hundred dollars — was turned over to the Iowa Teens Against Polio Drive.

Newton High Thespians learned that participating in these projects was more than just a service — it was a lot of fun! — *Sue Breckenridge, Clerk*



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"Our cast responded eagerly to their assignments and this response lasted until after the final performance. Several expressed the desire to produce it several more times. Members of the audience remarked that the play was well cast, suspenseful, and, above all, *different*." — Richard L. Shillinglaw, Dramatics Director, Carpenter, Iowa, Consolidated School.

"The cast and myself thoroughly enjoyed producing this play. It is fast moving and laugh provoking. I believe our cast gave the best endorsement. After our production, they were so thrilled with the fun of presenting it, they wanted to do it again." — Jean Purson, Brooklyn, Iowa, High School.

"Many felt we should give a second performance . . . they wanted to see it again. The cast was interested in developing the character they were to portray up to the actual production." — Lester M. Cook, Director, Cheraw, Colorado, High School.

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EVANSTON, ILLINOIS



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SAINT MARTIN, OHIO

Troupe 668

For excitement and pure joy I would like to propose to you Thespians the production of such a play as Henri Ghéon's *The Sleeping Princess*. In this type of theater piece there is almost limitless attitude and latitude in which the player may extend his characterization. The never-never quality and the pervading whimsy that shoots through the lines ignite into fast and delightful action. We were fortunate in our May production to have two ballet groups from our school's dancing classes. In this way we had a Shining Dream sequence and comic choreography from the waiters who served the royal christening banquet. We used inter-pretive instrumental themes to bring on the Seventh Fairy, the Princess, and the Prince. Our "forest" was a gallant one holding painted branches with painted paper leaves while their "trunks," encased in drycleaning bags, leered evilly from elongated faces at the dashing Prince Hector. — Myra Burstein, Secretary

—O—

SPANISH FORK, UTAH

Troupe 25

It was an exciting event when eleven white envelopes were passed out. These envelopes contained bids for membership into Thespian Troupe 25. All those who have earned the necessary points to gain membership are given bids. Several requirements are made, and ten days are given to fill and memorize them.

The night of the initiation arrives, and the very much frightened initiates sign their names to the roll. After rigid questioning by the officers, the sponsor gives the new members the pledge. The Candle-Lighting Ceremony is presented; and after, all join together for fun at a party.

The Thespian Club is highly respected in the Spanish Fork High School. The initiation is only one of many activities carried on by the Thespians, but it is one most interesting and unusual.

I can well be proud to be called a Thespian.—
Reporter

—O—

STREATOR, ILL.

Troupe 1677

Troupe 1677 of Streator Township High School has assisted in the following activities: We provided ushers for The Illinois Valley Orchestral Concert and Rosalind Hupp Ballet. We applied make-up for the school Water Ballet. We provided programs of readings and monologues for several community women's clubs and church groups.

Our Troupe sponsored a "Good Neighbor Night" and played host to the Ottawa High School Troupe. We held a joint meeting and exchanged club ideas. Following the meeting, we presented the one-act play, *The Potboiler*.

Troupe 1677 sponsored a school assembly by presenting *The Potboiler* for the student body. Several Thespian members then gave short speeches to explain the activities and purposes of the National Thespian Society and Troupe 1677 to promote interest in our newly formed group.

We closed the year's activities last night by sponsoring a banquet for all students who participated in any way in the dramatic activity program this year. Each member, attending the banquet, was to come in costume of his favorite stage personality or as a character from a play. We were pleased with the response, and the many costumes were original and fun! The officers for next year were installed, Thespian members presented original monologues, and prizes were awarded for outstanding costumes. The highlight of the evening was the awarding of acting honor certificates and the Best Thespian Award. The acting awards were selected by the students who had been cast in plays throughout the year and kept secret until the winners were announced. We had many favorable comments on the banquet, and several students have been inquiring as to how they can become members.

We feel the National Thespian Society has offered our students and our dramatics program a great deal. Even though we are only half a year old, interest has been promoted immensely since our affiliation. We wish to express our appreciation for all your organization has done for us. — Reporter

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MATILDA TO ELEANORA

(Continued from page 14)

Adelicia of Louvaine was the eldest daughter of Godfrey of Louvaine, Duke of Brabant and Lower Lorraine, and Ida, Countess of Namur. Adelicia became the bride of Henry I, King of England, on January 24, 1121.

On a seal, pendant to the charter she gave to Reading Abbey, she was shown wearing the regal costume of the Queen of England. On several points this differed from the costumes of her predecessors. The transparent veil worn by Matilda of Flanders was changed to a drapey similar to the *Haïke* of the Arabs. Like that celebrated arab mantle, it was hooded over the head, and hanging down, each cheek was tied in front. The ample folds of the mantle extend over the arms, nearly covering her whole body. Adelicia's crown held this mantle to her head by being "fixed" over it. Her crown was a simple smooth band of gold set with three large gems. Three high points rose from the crown and each terminated in a trefoil of pearls. A cap of satin or velvet could be seen just above the circlet. Adelicia held in her right hand the scepter of mercy, surmounted with a dove and finished with a trefoil. The orb of sovereignty was in her left hand, to which, except by the special grace of her royal lord, she could have no right. The queen's robe or gown closely fit her body. It was elegantly worked in a diamond pattern from the throat to her feet over which it flowed.

Matilda of Boulogne was the daughter of Mary of Scotland and Eustace, Count of Boulogne. She became the bride of Stephen de Blois, nephew of Henry I, in the year 1114. She was crowned Queen of England on March 22, 1136, after her husband, Stephen, usurped the throne at the time of his uncle's, the king's death.

In a lofty chancel window of the ruins of Furness Abbey were the busts of Stephen and Matilda. They each wore their royal diadems. Matilda's veil flowed from beneath the royal circlet in graceful folds on either side of her softly-moulded oval face. Her dress fitted closely and was ornamented in front with a mullet-shaped brooch.

Eleanora of Aquitaine was the hereditary sovereign of her country. She married Henry II, and they were crowned King and Queen of England on December 19, 1154.

The coronation of Eleanora and Henry II were without parallel for magnificence. Queen Eleanora brought from Constantinople many mantles of silk brocades of splendid texture. Later this queen wore a wimple, or close coif, with a circlet of gems put over it. Her kirtle, or close gown, had tight sleeves and was fastened just below her throat with full gathers. This was confined with a rich collar of jewels. Over this she wore the elegant pelisson, or outer robe, bordered with

fur. The robe had very loose sleeves lined with ermine, showing the tight kirtle sleeves beneath. In some portraits the Queen was seen with her hair braided and closely wound around her head with jeweled bands. Over all was thrown a square of fine lawn or gauze that took the place of a veil and was worn precisely as the *faziola* that was still the national costume of Venice as late as the nineteenth century. Sometimes this coverchief, or kerchief, was drawn over the features down below the chin. It thus took the place of veil and bonnet when worn out-of-doors. Sometimes it was pulled down low on the brow, depending on whether the wearer was disposed to show or conceal her face. Frequently the coverchief was held in place by the bandeau or circlet being placed on the head over it. Girls before marriage wore their hair in ringlets or loose on their shoulders.

Henry II made his appearance at his coronation with short hair, moustache, and a shaved chin. He wore a doublet and a short Angevin cloak that immediately gained for him the nickname of "Court-mantle." His dalmatica was of the

richest brocade, bordered with gold embroidery. At this coronation ecclesiastics were first seen in England dressed in sumptuous robes of silk and velvet, worked with gold. This was in imitation of the luxury of the Greek church. The splendor of the dresses seen by Queen Eleanora at Constantinople caused the introduction of this type of costume in the western church.

Queen Eleanora presented her husband with a princess in 1156. She was the eldest daughter, the Princess Matilda. Her celebrated son, Richard Coeur de Lion, was born in September, 1157, at the palace, Beau-Monte, in Oxford. This renowned university claims the honor of being the birthplace of that great warrior, Richard the Lion-Hearted.

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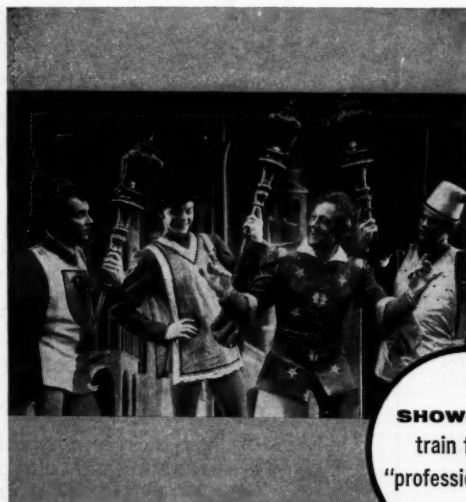
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THE BEGINNING

(Continued from page 13)

later, Edward P. Christy brought his newly-organized minstrel troupe to New York and remained at the Mechanic's Hall on Broadway for nine years and eleven months.

The pattern of the Christy Minstrels was followed by following companies during the next forty years. The entire company marched on stage forming a semi-circle with the end men—at first only one, but later, as many as six—identified by their musical instruments as "Mr. Tambo" to the right and "Mr. Bones" to the left. The middle man or Interlocutor, at the center of the semi-circle, opened the show with the words, "Gentlemen, be seated. We will commence with the overture." The first part, consisting of a series of humorous questions and answers between the end men and the Interlocutor interspersed with comic songs, sentimental ballads, and instrumental numbers, concluded with a "walk-around" in which each member strutted around the circle several times and then contributed his specific specialty. The immortal "Dixie" was written in two days by Dan Emmett for the "walk-around" and serves as an excellent example of the spirited finale of the first part.

The second part, or "Olio," consisted of specialties by the company in the manner of the variety or vaudeville program—a type of musical theater which came into general acceptance in 1881 under Tony Pastor, a former minstrel entertainer. The "Olio" might include Chauncey Olcott singing Irish ballads; George "Honey Boy" Evans of the "sweet" voice; Eddie Leonard singing "Dinah"; George Primrose doing his soft-shoe dance; Jack Diamond dancing while playing a small harp; as well as other special songs, jokes, short sketches, and dances. Then, in the third part, the entire company presented a burlesque of well-known dramas. As an indication of the comedy level of these burlesques, *Macbeth* was presented as *Bad Breath*, and *Romeo and Juliet* became *Roman Nose and Suet*. Eddie Foy, who gained his early training in minstrel shows, noted that "the Negro minstrel show was far and away the most popular of all amusements for the masses, and even the elite patronized those of the better type."

Between 1850 and 1870—the hey-day of the minstrel—the number of performers increased until one company boasted of 100 members, two bands of fourteen members each, two drum corps, a quartette of mounted buglers, and several other instrumental groups. The basic pattern of the performance, however, did not change and may have been a contributing cause to the decline of this form of musical entertainment. The main reason, however, seems to have been the increased cost of such large companies without a similar increase at the box-office. The inherent weakness may have

been its strictly synthetic nature. One theater historian describes the minstrel movement as "a group of Northern whites seeking a uniform pattern of entertainment that would be theatrically and economically successful." While some minstrel companies were comprised of negro performers, such as the Georgia Minstrels, the major success was by the all-male white companies with their black faces and curly wigs. Still, Thomas Rice, Dan Emmett, E. P. Christy, Dan Bryant, Primrose and West, Lew Dockstader, J. H. Haverly, Al G. Fields and their minstrel colleagues contributed a national vigor to the musical theater. The companies of these minstrel men provided rich training for such stars as Tony Pastor, Harrigan and Hart, Weber and Fields, Francis Wilson, Eddie Foy, Fred Stone, Al Jolson, and others. Musical America would be much less interesting if we did not have the minstrel melodies of Stephen Foster to sing along with the songs of Victor Herbert and Richard Rodgers.

During the height of the "burnt cork era," an event took place which was to have a tremendous impact on American theater audiences. On the night of September 12, 1866, at Niblo's Gardens, where a permanent theater had been erected (1849) for year-round use, *The Black Crook* thrilled New York theatergoers with its spectacular staging and daringly-costumed *corps de ballet*. William Wheatley, the manager of the theater, had bought the scenery, costumes, and services of a newly-arrived French ballet troupe which had lost its New York theater due to fire. He combined their talents with a melodrama, based on the *Faust* legend, written by Charles M. Barras. Thus *The Black Crook*, half-German, half-French, provided "the most costly and beautiful stage machinery, scenery, and costumes even seen in America." The plot was unimportant, but, the breath-taking transformations (scene changes) from a grotto hung with stalactites to the brilliant Palace of Dew Drops enchanted audiences. The age of spectacle had truly begun. Stage designers and carpenters tried to outdo each other in all types of drama. But it was difficult indeed to compete with Benson J. Sherwood, head carpenter of Niblo's Gardens. He was over six feet tall and weighed 400 pounds! *The Black Crook* ran for 475 performances with a gross income of more than \$1,000,000.

Of the many revivals of *The Black Crook*, the outstanding one was the Kiralfy's in 1868. The three Kiralfy brothers, Hungarian dancers and pantomimists, demonstrated their theatrical acumen by realizing the spectacular possibilities in staging Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* as an extravaganza in 1875—some eighty years before Michael Todd.

The novel success and the daringness of the costumes in *The Black Crook* was

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replaced in the public interest by the arrival in New York of Lydia Thompson and her company of British Blondes (1868). They presented a program of parodies of current plays and novels, mixed with short farces, comedies, and melodramas, but the obvious attraction was not the material, but the content of the company. Naturally Miss Thompson and her company met with a certain amount of disapproval, as did *The Black Crook*, and for the first time in theater history, the word "burlesque" began to acquire some of its modern negative connotation. Ten years later the first American performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* provided the necessary antidote that would then attract audiences of both ladies and gentlemen who would view the musical theater with a less-disapproving eye.

The record of these early days of the American musical theater would not be complete without mention of George L. Fox's delightful pantomime in the English tradition, *Humpty Dumpty* (1868), with its Mother Goose characters and a variety of specialty acts, which enjoyed a phenomenal run of 483 performances, and the farcical extravaganza, *Evangeline* (1874), a "homespun product" of song and comic antics, inspired by Longfellow's heroine and created by two Boston newspapermen, Edward E. Rice and J. Cheever Goodwin. Among subsequent Rice creations were *Pop* (1883), an operatic comedy, *Adonis* (1884), starring Henry E. Dixey, and *1492 Up-To-Date* (1893), but none equalled the success of *Evangeline*.

Although early American musical theater owed much to its foreign antecedents, a gay galaxy of American star performers soon shone so brilliantly that the alien origins were completely relegated to the shadows.



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READ ALOUD!

(Continued from page 11)

The changing moods of the author have guided you in your reading.

Words, too, have moods and tone color

Deep wet moss and cool blue shadows
Beneath a bending fir,
And the purple solitude of mountain,
When only the dark owls stir —
Oh, there will come a day, a twilight,
When I shall sink to rest
In deep wet moss and cool blue shadows

Upon a mountain's breast,
And yield a body torn with passions,
And bruised with earthly scars,
To the cool oblivion of evening,
Of solitude and stars.

Can you make that word "wet" seem moist? And "cool"—can you say it as though the sun had failed to rise on a fresh spring day? Hold the vowels of the word "deep" until the spoken word suggests great depth. When you do this, you are taking the black and white sketch of the author's words and are painting it in rich, oil colors. Pick up your tone brush and try it.

With the beauty of tone color is the beauty of rhythm and of rhyme. Some poems seem to dance. Read this one sensing its one-two-three rhythm. Try dancing as you read it, if you wish. Can your feet catch that one-two-three pulse?

It was many and many a year ago,

In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of Annabel Lee —
And this maiden she lived with no other thought

Than to love and be loved by me.
She was a child and I was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love —

I and my Annabel Lee —
With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me.
And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, by night
Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love

Of those who were older than we —
Of many far wiser than we —
And neither the angels in Heaven above

Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee: —
For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I see the

bright eyes

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side

Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,

In her sepulchre there by the sea —
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

"Beams," "dreams," "rise," "eyes"—these repeated sounds are like the recurring tinkling of bells. Ring the bells as you come to them.

Suppose you want to share your reading with an audience. If you were giving a play, you would put a program in their hands. Here, instead of a printed program, you will give them program notes in the form of introductory remarks. The better you can word these, the more effective they will be. You will include all information needed for your listeners to understand and appreciate your selection, such as the author's name, the title, and sometimes a discussion of terms used that might not be understood. You might quote an evaluation of a famous critic such as this comment made by Swinburne on Keat's *Ode to a Nightingale*, "one of the final masterpieces of human work in all time and for all ages." Occasionally telling of the circumstances that inspired the writing will arouse interest and make for greater appreciation and insight. The audience's interest would be aroused in hearing *Jenny Kiss'd Me* if they were told Leigh Hunt was referring to the wife of Thomas Carlyle,

Jenny, who, hating the loneliness of her country home, was so happy to see Leigh that she kissed him. Arousing interest is one of the major reasons for giving an introduction. You have done well if you can arouse a feeling of expectation in your audience, have them thinking "this ought to be good." And an effective introduction will establish the right mood, create the correct atmosphere for the literary selection. Try to word your remarks so that the last sentence of the introduction leads smoothly into the first line of the material to be read. Keep in mind that the introduction should not overshadow the poem, story, comic essay, drama, or other type of writing that you have chosen to read. Make it as short as the nature of the material will allow. Many times one well-worded sentence is all that is needed. Incorporate the name and the author in this sentence so that you will not need the formal stating of author and title just before the reading itself.

The techniques used to bring out the spirit and meaning of a poem are the same used to interpret lines in a play. Let's see what you have been doing. For one thing, you have been "thinking with the senses." Instead of just saying a word aloud, you have been concentrating on its meaning so that the tone with which you say the word suggests its meaning. "Swashbuckling" has a swagger. "Delicate" is light. "Hard" differs from "soft." "Stupendous" is large and loud. And you

have been responding with your body and your voice to the mood of the poem. The emotions of the literature find expression in your muscle tone. Anger calls for a tightening of the muscles, whereas love causes a relaxing of them. Just as the actor pantomimes reaction to stimuli from other actors and incidents on the stage, the reader reacts physically to the incidents pictured vividly in his mind.

Tempo, to the reader, is as important as it is to the actor. Some ideas require rapid delivery. Others demand a slow pace. The passage expressing a deep thought must be given slowly with "sinking-in" pauses to allow the reader time to comprehend the ideas.

Phrasing of the oral interpreter is governed by the same laws governing the phrasing of the actor. All the words needed to express one unit of thought must be read together. This applies even though the line of the poem stops in the middle of the idea. The reader runs on into the next line without pausing. Intelligent phrasing is an important element in good reading.

Rhythm is present in prose as well as poetry and needs to be sensed by the actor as well as the oral reader. There is rhythm of character as well as rhythm of ideas and of action that help express the meaning of a selection.

Oh, yes, reading poetry is fun. And the skills needed to do it well are not hard to master. The answers to your questions of how to read are in the ma-

terial itself. How fast, how loud, with what tone?—just follow the author's clues. Note his words, his moods, his pictures, his responses to the events. Share these with your listeners and you will all have fun!

Thanks are due to the following poets, their representatives and publishers for permission to include these poems: "Moonlight" from IN AMERICAN: THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JOHN V. A. WEAVER, copyright, 1932, by John V. A. Weaver. "Jis' Blue" by Etta Baldwin Oldham from THE FORUM. "Deep, Wet Moss" from SLOW SMOKE, by Lew Sarett, copyright, 1953, by Lew Sarett, used by permission of Mrs. Lew Sarett.

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Snobbish Elyzabethe Montclayre has been unfriendly with her sister, Jane Klunk, for years. She is proud that "no Montclayre has worked for three generations" and is possessive of her son Neddie-boy whose interests are sports cars, polo and water skiing. Sister Jane and her son, Ed, a bus driver, are so lacking in culture Elyzabethe wants nothing to do with them. Their brother, wealthy Edward Folger, schemed to get the Montclayres and Klunks on friendly terms. When he died he left his fabulous hotel, Aristocratic Arms, to Ned and Ed on strange terms: If they live together for a year, if their mothers join them for dinner every week, they will inherit the hotel jointly.

Ed decides to live and act crudely so Ned will leave and furnishes his half the room with camping equipment. Ned furnishes his half in elegance to overpower Ed with culture. Each tries to outwit the other in every way—even in romance—but eventually they switch interests—Ned is actually going to work, Ed won't always be a bus driver—they will happily own the hotel together. Elyzabethe, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, realizes she has been a "snobbish phoney" and patches things up with her sister. Other characters—and believe us they are all "characters", are Bobbins, Ned's valet, and Sweetie, a maid, who find romance together; Virgil Valentine, first assistant Hotel Manager; and Bill, a wisecracking bellboy.

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HELEN HARDING ALDISERT

(Continued from page 10)

realized that her dramatic training was an aid in posing for reproductions of real life situations. She is shown wearing a white uniform in numerous hospital scenes; at home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Harding of Cleveland Heights, Ohio; and at prayer in church. Each pose reveals the sure touch of the accomplished, well-trained actress.

AMERIKA picked up the COSMOPOLITAN article, translated it, added three pictures, and arranged for a special new color photo of Helen for the cover. The United States exports this Russian language monthly magazine for distribution in 76 Russian cities. AMERIKA goes to Russia in an exchange agreement which permits a Soviet magazine, U.S.S.R., to be sold on newsstands in United States cities. Helen's picture with its revelation of gentleness will carry behind the Iron Curtain a symbol of American womanhood greatly to be desired.



Helen impersonating Mrs. Margaret St. John Andrews, founder of the Andrews School for Girls, Willoughby, Ohio.

Although married to Dr. C. Aldisert and living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Helen returned on February 10, 1957, for the second impersonation on Founder's Day. It was then that a series of pictures were taken in costume for the current school catalogue and one in modern dress, exclusively for DRAMATICS. The latter photo, of all taken since her rise to fame, seems best to reveal Helen's indefinable character.

Thus Helen's international story is not only centered about the fact that she was able to pour out her feelings concerning the challenge of nursing into a winning speech but also that she was capable of surmounting competition in the presentation of her ideas through her training as a Thespian.

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SELECTING THE PLAY

(Continued from page 9)

show) with one set of flats painted an eerie blue and black. We duplicated all of the spectacular effects of the Broadway original including Count Dracula's disappearance into thin air at the end of Scene I, Act III. In the professional production this was accomplished by means of a trap door on the stage, but we achieved an equally baffling effect by using an escape cape and a blinding explosion of green flash powder from the desk at center stage where the professor had gone to get the mallet and stake. In the final vault scene where Dracula's coffin is discovered among cobwebs, our actors came in with seemingly bright flashlights which were really toned quite dim with parchment gelatine. Only one strip of blue lights was shining down from overhead. This blue light on smoke clouds lingering from the explosion of the previous scene gave a cold, clammy, fog effect. In fact several people watching the play thought we had opened the outside doors and let cold air into the auditorium because of this visually chilling effect.

Sometimes we have altered the end of a play slightly to achieve a more pictorial or memorable moment. On *Lost Horizon* (which is not a Broadway script) we inserted a beautiful finale somewhat reminiscent of the ending of the Frank Capra movie version of this famous story. Briefly in pantomime we saw Conway returning to Shangri-La and Helen. Both stood silhouetted on the oriental portico with moonlit Mt. Karakal in the background. As they embraced we played strains from the romantic musical theme which Dimitri Tiomkin had composed for the *Lost Horizon* movie. We then faded our lights gradually before closing the curtain. This brief but dream-like finale gave an extra lift to the production and made a lasting impression on our audience.

We pointed up the final sequence of *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* by having the divine Stranger stand in a pink halo light as he told Stasia, the maid, that he also was a servant and had his work. After she had watched him pass by the outside window, Stasia, with an inspired look, turned to go into the dining room. As she exited, we had the stage gradually darken while uplifting background music swelled out. Only late afternoon sunlight was shining in from the windows. Suddenly everyone in the audience noticed the faint outline of a cross appear on the wall near which the Stranger had last stood. Even children attending the play caught the significance of the cross as the music continued and the curtain slowly closed.

Both *Captain Applejack* and *The Black Flamingo* were made more exciting by expanding the dueling sequences. Since swords and swordplay have always been a hobby of mine, we staged these

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scenes with a reckless, cinematic flare rarely seen on the stage today. A thrilling novelty in our recent production of *The Shop at Sly Corner* was our having Descius Heiss blow a real dart (from his South American blow-pipe) across the stage and into the sofa where the troublesome Archie sat unaware of his approaching peril.

Back in 1939 when I was taking dramatic work at Ohio State University under Eugene H. Bahn and the late Herman Miller, both of these professors impressed upon me the fact that in the theater it is never possible to please everybody. Certainly this is true in Hollywood and on Broadway today. It was probably true in the Moscow Art Theatre during the "Golden Age" of Constantine Stanislavsky. We must keep this constantly in mind when we select plays for the high school. If we cater only to a seventh-grade-audience level, our upper classmen and adults attending the evening performance may well say that it is "just another one of those school plays." On the other hand, if we do something distinctive, we may be criticized by the junior high school teacher because our production is too ambitious or sophisticated for her pupils. The best reply to this criticism is that since junior high students are given samples of fine literature in their classes rather than comic books to read, this same reasoning should apply to their introduction to play-going.

School administrators should be reminded that many of the so-called "high school plays" in reality satirize the public school system and often make teachers, principals, and school board members objects of ridicule. It is much better to turn to former stage successes featuring romance, adventure, mystery and self-sacrifice. Perhaps the director in his play selection should remember a line from Henry Van Dyke's short story, *The Other Wise Man*, which reads: "It is better to follow even a shadow of the best than to remain content with the worst."

The dramatic coach has one of the most colorful jobs on the high school faculty because he is dealing with glamor, illusion, and something different all the time. His activities of make-believe develop poise, confidence, and new interests on the part of the students. He can by his play selections (and their careful staging) create an appreciation for the finer things in life. But producing unusual plays often involves the taking of a personal artistic risk. Only the director knows from his past experience what plays are worth this calculated risk. He should keep his head in the clouds and follow his dream of bringing unusual theater to his community. Though he may consult others, he must always make his final selections himself. When students, faculty, or administrators make the play choices for him, the director has lost the dream.

BRIEF VIEWS

By WILLARD FRIEDERICH



MAKE BELIEVE by Edward Goodman. Scribners, 1956; 242 pp.

The author, long a Broadway producer and instructor at the American Academy of Fine Arts, has summarized his life-time in the theater with this analysis of the art of acting. His theory is an eclectic one, standing somewhere between the professional technician and the Stanislavsky "method" actor who lives the role. Mr. Goodman clearly separates the actor, who is always the technician until the technique becomes automatic in his non-conscious mind, from the character, who always experiences the events of the play in his conscious mind. Other facets of acting receive the usual emphasis: understanding the play and character, relaxation, listening, projection (one of the best, most helpful chapters in the book), body control, motivation, imagination, vocal coloring, stage speech, economy of technique, pace and timing, rehearsal procedure.

Most of these problems receive excellent definition and explanation, and the advice offered is good advice for any actor in any type of theater. Occasionally, however, what the author says has to do primarily — or, sometimes, only — with the professional actor: for example, Mr. Goodman suggests that a teacher should only now and then stimulate the actor's imagination (by such devices as improvisation, substitution, or the James-Lange theory) to help him achieve a grasp of the role. His reasoning is that there are more talented actors than the profession can use anyway, so why manufacture more that do not really have what it takes within themselves. He does admit of course that if a director is stuck with such an actor he may justifiably use any device to produce the desired finished product, for then the show, not the actor, is the main objective. Most amateur teachers and directors will probably have to resort to many such tactics in order to both teach classes and produce plays with the interested but not professionally talented youngsters to whom they owe service.

All in all, however, this is a fascinating book, written in easy and humorous style, with much that is relevant to the amateur theater. The discussion of the relation between technique and "living" a role is one of the clearest and best anywhere, and alone worth the price of the book.

SOCIAL GROWTH THROUGH PLAY PRODUCTION by Jack Simos. Association Press, 1957; 192 pp.

With degrees in both theater and social work, the author, now Executive Director of the Children's Aid Society of Indiana, makes quite a case, supported by histories of the youngsters he has personally worked with, for the social value of play production — a belief shared by most dramatics teachers but possibly one not so frequently illustrated in technical terms by a professional case-worker. While most will agree with this premise, however, some will not fully agree that the methods and processes of directing that Mr. Simos describes as his means to an end are the *only* means. He is a Stanislavsky convert and predicates that the Stanislavsky method of character analysis and presentation is the primary stimulus for the kind of understanding that produces social growth. His descriptions of his handling of rehearsals are interesting, thought-provoking, and highly useful to any director; indeed among the best descriptions to be found of the Stanislavsky method in action. On the other hand, many directors under pressure of time will not be as bland as Mr. Simos about putting off learning lines so long or allowing a rehearsal to resolve

itself into an evening's discussion of a principle, such as anti-semitism, suggested by the attitude of one of the play's characters. There is a time and place for both, it is true; and probably each director will have to decide for himself, according to his objectives, just when, where, and how long each phase will work into the teaching process. Certainly most will agree with the author that a poor dramatics program may work as much harm as good. His principles of casting are fairly standard, as are the suggested benefits of successful participation: release of emotion, enrichment of living, understanding of self and others, adventure, earned success, etc. While perhaps few teachers will accept this book in its entirety, few, on the other hand, will fail to find much in it of real value and provocation; and they owe it to themselves to read it carefully.

THE TECHNIQUE OF ACTING by F. Cowles Strickland. McGraw-Hill, 1956; 306 pp.

Most acting books spend much of their time explaining the background of the good actor, the proper psychological approach to his understanding of the play and character, the right method of interpreting the role, and so on. They often argue the relative merits of thinking the role with the mind or feeling the role with the heart, or doing the action required and allowing it to engender the proper inner feeling ("action produces belief which produces emotion," say McGaw, for example). This book emphasizes none of these things, proposing that any actor is judged by his effect upon the audience and, if he can rightly stimulate the right effect in his audience, his manner of arriving at that stage of proficiency is relatively unimportant: "Some actors will find it easier to work from the inside out, and others from the outside in; all actors will find that there are times when they must use both systems. . . . Ideally the two approaches should be used simultaneously; but both paths lead to the same performance from different directions."

Prof. Strickland therefore presents almost definitive discussions of acting techniques, shows the effects produced by variations in the techniques, and then leaves it to the director and the actor to decide which of the effects best fit the motivations of the character and will blend into a unified interpretation of the role. Plentiful exercises, based on about ten well-known plays, illustrate the points made in all chapters: for example, making an entrance, building a climax, timing ("the exact and precise time re-

lationship between a physical action of relatively short duration and the spoken word or words with which it is associated"), progressions, pointing, rhythm ("rate of speed of the individual actor"), tempo ("actual mechanical speed with which the play is performed"), pace ("the duration perceived by the audience") and so on. There are, on the other hand, no exercises for improvement of voice and bodily responsiveness *per se*; the author assumes that such basic requisites are already under control; and such items as listening and motivation are not mentioned as such, being by-products of the techniques discussed. Perhaps some of this book is slightly beyond the average teen-age amateur, but most obviously every director will find the book invaluable in clarifying the scope and selection of the proper techniques for those effects he desires from his actors.

THEATRE SCENECRAFT by Vern Adix. Children's Theatre Press, 1956; 309 pp.

This is probably the simplest and yet most complete handbook to date for the scenery designer, builder, painter, and shifter, the electrician, and the property man. It assumes nothing and starts from absolute scratch — for example, it carefully describes the need for a tack-hammer and a pair of scissors; and yet virtually anything the backstage helper might wish to know is found somewhere in the book, from painting marble to repairing a broken dowel. Explanations are clear but quite concise, arranged under easily seen headings in reference-book form. Profuse line drawings and photographs illustrate practically all items, and an excellent index makes finding any item a matter of seconds. So many books cover in detail the equipment and practices used only in professional or professionally equipped theaters; wading through such material is often confusing to the beginner. Such matters are kept to a minimum in this book; and, where they do appear, are, because of their isolation and directive headings, easily skipped or found, as the case may be. Much of the material is standard, but the chapters on properties and furniture are not found elsewhere often, nor in this most clear-cut detail. All in all, this should probably be one of the most useful and indispensable books in the library of any theater group; and, quite probably, if only one book covering this material can be bought, this should be it.

A STAGE CREW HANDBOOK by Sol Cornberg and Emanuel Gebauer. Harper, Rev., 1957; 291 pp.

Anyone who was not familiar with the first edition of this lavishly illustrated encyclopaedia of the backstage part of play production should certainly get acquainted with this new edition immediately, for it has been and still is one of the most complete and detailed aids on the market. If he has a copy of the first edition, however, there is no need to get this so-called revised edition; for, as with many books, this one is a revised edition primarily only in format. With the exception of a few minor items — such as recommending four grades of lumber instead of three, a few changes in the section on color theory, and the addition of a paragraph on the Izenour light board — the material is exactly the same; so are the illustrations except for one (the color cone) which has been omitted. This does not reduce the value of the initial book of course. Its use of the question-answer method to give the information needed by the carpenters, painters, property men, effects men, electrician, flymen, grips, technical director, and designer makes the plethora of information easy to find and understand. True, many of the directions assume a fully equipped, ideal stage; but reasonable adaptations may be made by intelligent workers on an amateur stage of any limitations. Any director who encourages his students to follow the principles recommended in this book will be doing just about all he can to develop an adult, professional attitude to the theory and practices of good theater.

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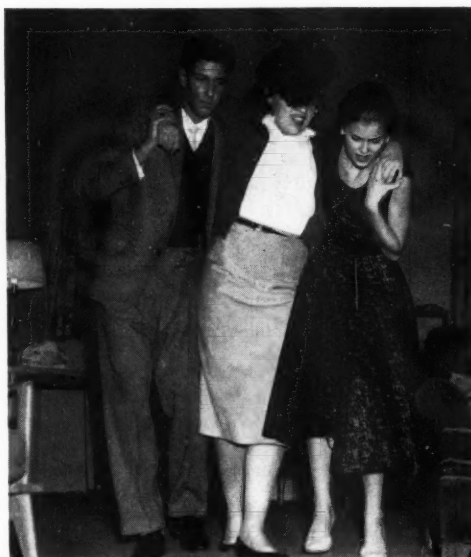
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